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THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE

NEW SERIES, VOL. XXV.



THE
CORNHILL
MAGAZINE

NEW SERIES

VOL. XXV.

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THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

JULY 1895.

CLEG KELLY, ARAB OF THE CITY :

HIS PROGRESS AND ADVENTURES.¹

BY S. R. CROCKETT,

AUTHOR OF 'THE STICKIT MINISTER,' 'THE RAIDERS,' ETC.

ADVENTURE I.²

THE OUTCASTING OF CLEG KELLY.

'It's all a dumb lie!—God's dead!'

Such a silence had never fallen upon the Sunday-school, since the fatal day when the grate was blown into the middle of the floor by Mickey McGranaghan, a recent convert and a temporary one to the particular orthodoxy of Hunker Court. But the new explosion far outstripped the old in its effects. For it contained a denial of all the principles upon which the school was founded, and especially it confounded and blasphemed the cheerful optimism of Mr. James Lugton, its superintendent, otherwise and more intimately known as 'Pund o' Cannles.'

The statement which contained so emphatic a denial of the Trinity was made by Cleg Kelly, a barelegged loon of twelve, who stood lone and unfriended on the floor before the superintendent's desk in the gloomy cellar known as Hunker Court school. Cleg Kelly had been reported by his teacher for incorrigible persistence in misconduct. He had introduced pins point upwards through the

¹ Copyright, 1895, by S. R. Crockett.

² A few of the earlier chapters of 'Cleg Kelly, Arab of the City,' appeared in another form in a Scottish paper, now extinct; but these have been revised and rewritten in order that they may take their own place in the complete series of adventures.

cracks in the forms. He had an instrument of wire cunningly plaited about his fingers, by means of which he could nip unsuspecting boys as many as three or four from him—which is a great advantage to a boy in a Sunday-school. Lastly, he had fallen backwards over a seat when asked a question, had stood upon his hands and head while answering it, resuming his first position as if nothing had happened when the examination passed on to the next boy. In fact, he had filled the cup of his iniquities to the brim.

His teacher did not so much object to the pranks of Cleg Kelly himself. He objected because, being ragged, barelegged, with garments picturesquely ventilated, and a hat without a crown, he was as irresistible in charm and fascination to all the other members of his class as if he had been arrayed in silver armour. For though Hunker Court was a mission school, it was quite a superior mission; and (with the exception of one class, which was much looked down upon) the lowest class of children were not encouraged to attend. Now Cleg Kelly, by parentage and character, was almost, if not quite, as the mothers of the next social grade said, 'the lowest of the low.'

So when Cleg's teacher, a respectable young journeyman plumber, could stand no more pranks and had grown tired of cuffing and pulling, he led Cleg up to the awful desk of the superintendent from which the rebukes and prizes were delivered.

Thereupon 'Pund o' Candles,' excellent but close-fisted chandler and general dealer, proceeded to rebuke Cleg. Now the rebukes of 'Pund o' Candles' smelt of the shop, and were delivered in the tones in which he addressed his apprentice boys when there were no customers in the shop—a tone which was entirely different from the suavity which he used when he asked, 'And what is the next article, madam?'

'Do you know, boy,' said the superintendent, 'that by such wicked conduct you are wilfully going on the downward road? You are a wicked boy, and instead of becoming better under your kind teacher, and taking advantage of the many advantages of this place devoted to religious instruction, you stick pins—brass pins—into better conducted boys than yourself. And so, if you do not repent, God will take you in your iniquity and cast you into hell. For God sees everything and punishes the bad people and rewards the good.'

The superintendent uttered, though he knew it not, the most ancient of heresies—that which Job refuted.

It was at this point in the oration of 'Pund o' Candles' that Cleg Kelly's startling interruption occurred. The culprit stopped making O's on the dusty floor with his toe, amongst the moist paper pellets which were the favourite distraction of the inattentive at Hunker Court; and, in a clear voice, which thrilled through the heart of every teacher and scholar within hearing, he uttered his denial of the eternity of the Trinity.

'It's all a dumb lie—God's dead!' he said.

There was a long moment's silence, and small wonder, as the school waited for the shivering trump of doom to split the firmament. And the patient and self-sacrificing teachers who gave their unthanked care to the youth of the court every Sunday, felt their breaths come short, and had a feeling as if they were falling over a precipice in a dream. At last Mr. James Lugton found his voice.

'Young and wicked blasphemer!' he said sternly, 'your presence shall no longer, like that of the serpent in Paradise, poison the instruction given at this school—I shall expel you from our midst——'

Here Cleg's teacher interposed. He was far from disliking his scholar, and had anticipated no such result of his unfortunate reference of his difficulty to the superintendent. For he liked Cleg's ready tongue, and was amused by the mongrel dialect of Scots and Irish which he spoke in moments of excitement.

'I beg pardon, sir,' he said, 'but I am quite willing to give Kelly another chance—he is not such a bad boy as you might think.'

The superintendent waved his hand in a dignified way. He rather fancied himself in such scenes, and considered that his manner was quite as dignified as that of his minister, when he was preaching his last memorable course of sermons upon the imprecatory psalms, and making solemn applications as to the fate of members of a sister denomination which worshipped just over the way.

'The boy is a bold blasphemer and atheist!' he said; 'he shall be cast out from among our innocent lambs. Charles Kelly, I solemnly expel you upon this Christian Sabbath day, as a wicked and incorrigible boy, and a disgrace to any respectable mission school.'

The attitude of the superintendent was considered especially fine at this point, and he went home personally convinced that the excellent and fitting manner in which he vindicated the good name

of Hunker Court upon this occasion, was sufficient to balance an extensive practice of the use of light weights in the chandler's shop at the corner of Hunker's Row. He further believes that judicious severity of this kind is acceptable in the highest quarters.

So as the resisting felon is taken to prison, Cleg Kelly, heathen of twelve years, was haled to the outer door and cast forth of Hunker Court. But as the culprit went he explained his position.

'It's all gammon that about prayin',' he cried; 'I've tried it heaps of times—never fetched it once! An' look at my mother. She just prays lashings, and all the time. An' me father, he's never a bit the better—no, nor her neither. For he thrashes us black and blue when he comes hame just the same. Ye canna gammon me, Pund o' Cannles, with your long pray-prayin' and your short weight. I tell you God's dead, and it's all a dumb lie!'

The last accents of the terrible renunciation lingered upon the tainted air even after the door had closed, and Cleg Kelly was an outcast. But the awed silence was broken by the whiz and jingle which occurred close to the superintendent's ear, as Cleg Kelly, Iconoclast, punctuated his thesis of defiance by sending a rock of offence through the fanlight over the door of Hunker Court mission school.

ADVENTURE II.

THE BURNING OF THE WHINNY KNOWES.

CLEG KELLY was now outcast and alien from the commonwealth. He had denied the faith, cast aside every known creed, and defied the Deity Himself. Soon he would defy the policeman and break the laws of man—which is the natural course of progression in iniquity, as every one knows.

So leaving Hunker Court he struck across the most unfrequented streets, where only a stray urchin (probably an Episcopalian) was spending the Sabbath chivvying cats, to the mountainous regions of Craigside, where the tall 'lands' of St. Leonards look out upon the quarried crags and steep hill ridges of Arthur's Seat. For Cleg was fortunate enough to be a town boy who had the country at his command just over the wall—and a wall, too, which he could climb at as many as twenty points. Only bare stubby feet, however, could overpass these perilous clefts. Cleg's great toes, horny as if shod with iron, fitted exactly into the stone

crevices from which the mortar had been loosened. His grimy little fingers found a purchase in the slightest nicks. And once on the other side, there was no policeman, park-keeper, or other person in authority, who could make the pace with Cleg's bare brown legs, up the loose clatter of the shingle between the lower greensward and the Radical Road.

So, after being expelled from Hunker Court, Cleg made straight for a nook of his own among the crags. Here, like a prudent outlaw, he took account of his possessions with a view to arranging his future career of crime. He turned out his pockets into his hat. This was, indeed, a curious thing to do. For the article which he wore upon his shaggy locks was now little more than the rim of what had once been a covering for the head, proof against wind and water. But though Cleg's treasures rested upon the ground, the fact that they were within his hat-rim focussed them, as it were, and their relative worth was the more easily determined.

The first article which Cleg deposited upon the ground inside his hat was a box of matches, which had been given him to light the gas with in the outlying corners of Hunker Court school, for that dank cellar was gloomy enough even on a summer afternoon. Then came some string, the long-pronged nipping-wires which he had taken from his father's stores, a pair of pincers, a knife with one whole and one broken blade, a pipe, some brown-paper tobacco of a good brand, a half-written exercise-book from the day-school at which Cleg occasionally looked in, five marbles of the variety known as 'commonies,' one noble knuckler of alabaster which Cleg would not have parted with for his life, a piece of dry bread, and, lastly, half an apple, with encroaching bays and projecting promontories, which indicated in every case but one the gap in Cleg's dental formation on the left side of his upper jaw, which dated from his great fight with Hole in the Wa' in the police yard. The exception was a clean semicircle, bitten right in to the apple-core. This was the tidemark of a friendly bite Cleg had given to a friend, in whose double row were no gaps. The perfect crescent had been made by the teeth of a lassie—one Vara Kavannah.

The box of matches was to its owner the most attractive article in all this array of wealth. Cleg looked into his hat-rim with manifest pleasure. He slapped his knee. He felt that he was indeed well adapted to the profession of outlaw. If he had to be a Cain, he could at least make it exceedingly lively in the Land of Nod.

It was a chilly day on the craigs, the wind blowing bask from the East, and everything underfoot as dry as tinder. The wild thought of a yet untried ploy surged up in Cleg's mind. He grasped the matchbox quickly, with thoughts of arson crystallising in his mind. He almost wished that he had set Hunker Court itself on fire. But just in time he remembered Vara Kavannah and her little brother Hugh.

'I'll get them to gang to anither school first,' he said.

But in the meantime, with the thought of setting fire to something in his heart and the matchbox in his hand, it was necessary to find the materials for a blaze. He had no powder with him or he would have made a 'peeoye'—the simple and inexpensive firework of metropolitan youth.

He looked up at the heather and whin which covered the Nether Hill. His heart bounded within him at the thought. He looked again at his matchbox, which was one of the old oval shape, containing matches so exceedingly and gratuitously sulphurous, that the very smell of one of them was well worth the halfpenny charged for the lot. So, without any further pause for reflection, Cleg stowed away all the possessions, inventoried with such accuracy above, into various outlying nooks and crevices among the seams and pockets of his flapping attire.

Having collected the last one of these, Cleg climbed up a crumbling cliff at the eastern end of the craigs, where the stones lie about in slats. Upon each of them, for all the world like green post-office wax dripped upon grey paper, was some curious mineral, which Cleg, in his hours of decent citizenship, collected and sold at easy rates to the boys of the Pleasance as a charm. This mysterious green stuff had even been made a seal of initiation into one of the most select, aristocratic, and bloody secret societies of which Cleg was a member. Indeed, if the truth must be told, Cleg had formed the association chiefly that he might be able to supply the badges of membership, for he had a corner in green mineral wax—at least so long as the mine at the east corner of the craigs remained undiscovered by the other adventurous loons of the south side.

Cleg soon reached the tawny, thin-pastured, thick-furzed slopes which constitute the haunch of Arthur's lion hill. In the days of Cleg's youth these were still clad thick with whins and broom, among which the birds built in the spring, and lovers sat in long converse on little swarded oases.

'I'll juist set fire to this wee bit knowe,' said Cleg, his heart beating within him at the enormity of the offence. 'There's no a "keelie" in the toon that wad dare to do as muckle!'

For the ranger of that particular part of the hill was an old soldier of great size and surprising swiftness in a race. And many had been the Arthur Street urchins who had suffered a sore skin and a night in the cells after being taken in dire offence. So 'the Warrior' they called him, for an all-sufficient name.

In a sheltered spot, and with the wind behind him, Cleg opened his matchbox. He struck a match upon the rough oval bottom. It spurted faintly blue, burned briskly, and then flickered out within Cleg's hollowed hands. Cleg grunted.

'A fizz an' a stink,' said he, summing up the case in a popular phrase.

The next went somewhat better. The flame reached the wood, dipped as if to expire, took hold again, and finally burned up in a broad-based yellow triangle. Cleg let it drop among the crisp, dry, rustling grasses at the roots of the whin bushes. Instantly a little black line ran forward and crossways, with hardly any flame showing. Cleg was interested, and laid the palm of his hand upon the ground. He lifted it instantly with a cry of pain. What had seemed a black line with an edge of flickering blue was really a considerable fire, which, springing from the dry couch grass and bent, was briskly licking up the tindery prickles of the gorse.

The next moment, with an upward bound and a noise like the flapping of a banner, the flame sprang clear of the whin bushes, and the blue smoke streamed heavenwards. Cleg watched the progress, chained to the spot. He well knew that it was time for him to be off. But with the unhallowed fascination of the murderer for the scene of his crime upon him, he watched bush after bush being swallowed up, and shouted and leaped with glee. But the progress of the flame was further and swifter than he had intended. One little knoll would have satisfied him. But in a minute, driven forward by a level-blowing, following wind, the flame overleaped the little strait of short turf, and grasped the next and far larger continent of whin.

Cleg, surprised, began to shrink from the consequences of his act. He had looked to revenge himself upon society for his expulsion from Hunker Court by making a little private fire, and lo! he had started a world conflagration. He ran round to the edge of the gorse covert. Two hedge-sparrows were fluttering

and dashing hither and thither, peeping and crying beseechingly. Cleg looked at the objective point of their anxiety, and there, between two thin branches, was the edge of a nest, and a little compact yellow bundle of three gaping mouths, without the vestige of a body to be seen.

'Guid life,' cried Cleg, who kept kindness to birds and beasts as the softest spot of his heart, 'guid life, I never thoct the birds wad be biggin' already!'

And with that he took off his coat, and seizing it in both hands he charged boldly into the front of the flame, disdainful of prickles and scorchings. He dashed the coat down upon a bush which was just beginning to crackle underneath; and by dint of hard fighting and reckless bravery he succeeded in keeping the fire from the little island, on the central bush of which was situated the hedge-sparrow's nest. Here he stood, with his coat threshing every way, keeping the pass with his life—brave as Horatius at the bridge (or any other man)—while the flames crackled and roared past him.

Suddenly there was a great fizzing and spitting from the ragged coat which Cleg wielded as a quenching weapon. The fatal matchbox, cause of all the turmoil, had exploded. The fumes were stifling, but the flames still threatened to spread, and Cleg still laid about him manfully. The tails of the coat disappeared. There was soon little left but the collar. Cleg stood like a warrior whose sword has broken in his hand in the face of the triumphant enemy. But the boy had a resource which is not usually open to the soldier. He cast the useless coat-collar from him, stripped a sleeved waistcoat, which had been given him by the wife of a mason's labourer, and, taking the garment by the two arms, he made an exceedingly efficient beater of the mole-skin, which had the dried lime yet crumbly upon it at the cuffs.

When at last 'the Warrior' came speeding up the hill, warned out of his Sabbath afternoon sleep by the cry that the whins were on fire, he was in no pleasant temper. He found, however, that the fire had been warded from the greater expanses by a black imp of a boy, burned and smutted, with the remains of a mole-skin garment clasped in a pair of badly burned hands.

When the crowd of wanderers had gathered from all parts of the hill, and the fire had been completely trampled out, the ranger began his inquiries. Cleg was the chief suspect, because no one

had seen any other person near the fire except himself. On the other hand no one had seen him light the whins, while all had seen him single-handed fighting the flames.

'It's Tim Kelly's loon, the housebreaker, that leaved in the Sooth Back!' said the inevitable officious stranger with the gratuitous local knowledge. At his father's ill-omened name there was an obvious hardening in the faces of the men who stood about.

'At any rate, the loon is better in the lock-up,' said the ranger sententiously.

At this Cleg's heart beat faster than ever. Many had been his perilous ploys, but never yet had he seen the inside of the prison. He acknowledged that he deserved it, but it was hard thus to begin his prison experience after having stayed to fight the fire, when he could easily have run away. There was unfairness somewhere, Cleg felt.

So, with the burnt relics of his sleeved waistcoat still in his hands, Cleg was dragged along down the edge of the Hunter's Bog. The ranger grasped him roughly by a handful of dirty shirt collar, and his strides were so long that Cleg's short legs were not more than half the time upon the ground.

But at a certain spring of clear, crystal water, which gushes out of the hillside from beneath a large round stone, the ranger paused.

He too had fought the flames, and he had cause to thirst. For it was Sunday afternoon, and he had arisen from his usual lethargic after-dinner sleep upon the settle opposite the kitchen fire.

So at the well he stooped to drink, one hand still on Cleg's collar, and the palm of the other set flat on the side of the boulder. It was Cleg's opportunity. He quickly twisted himself suddenly round, just after the ranger's lips had touched the water. The rotten cloth of his shirt tore, and Cleg sprang free. The ranger, jerked from the support of the stone, and at the same moment detached from his prisoner, fell forward with his head in the spring, while Cleg sped downhill like the wind. He was ready stripped for the race. So, leaving the panting chase far behind, he made for a portion of the encompassing wall, which none but he had ever scaled. Having clambered upon the top, he crossed his legs and calmly awaited the approach of the ranger.

'It's a warm day, Warrior,' said Cleg; 'ye seem to be sweatin'!'

'Ye limb o' Sawtan,' panted the ranger, 'gin ever I get ye this side o' the dyke, I'll break every bane in your body.'

'Faith,' answered Cleg, 'ye should be braw an' thankfu',

Warrior, for ye hae gotten what ye haena had for years, and had muckle need o' !'

'And what was that, ye de'il's buckie ?' cried the angry ranger.

'A wash !' said Cleg Kelly, as he dropped down the city side of the wall, and sped home to his fortress.

ADVENTURE III.

WHY CLEG KELLY HATED HIS FATHER.

THIS is a bad, black tale ; yet, for the sake of what comes after, it must be told.

Cleg Kelly had a father. He was a deeply pock-marked man who hated his son ; but not so bitterly as his son hated him. Once on a time Cleg Kelly had also a mother, and it is the story of his mother which remains to tell. The story of most men is the story of their mother. They drank love or hatred, scorn or sympathy, at her breasts.

So it was with Cleg Kelly. So let the story of Isbel Kelly be told. How a woman may be murdered in this land and none swing for it ! How a woman may be put to the torture every day and every night for years, and the voice of her crying mount (we must believe it) into the ears of the God of Sabaoth, yet no murmur reach her nearest neighbour upon the earth ! Gladlier would I tell a merrier tale, save that it is ever best to get the worst over first, as medicine goes before barley-sugar.

Isbel Kelly had not always been Isbel Kelly. That is to say, she had not always been unhappy. There was a time when Timothy Kelly had not come into her life. Isbel Beattie was once a country girl. She had sung in the morn as she went afield to call the dappled kine, as glad a milkmaid as any in song or story. Her foot was the lightest in the dance at the 'kirm,' her hand the deftest at the spinning-wheel, her cheerful presence the most desired when the butter would not come. For the butter ever comes fastest for a good-tempered woman. A vixenish disposition only curdles the milk. That is why young men, landward but wise, so eagerly offer to help the maids at the butter-making. And no sweeter maiden than Isbel Beattie ever wore print gowns and lilted 'O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad,' in all the parish of Ormiland—that is, till Timothy Kelly came, and Isbel sang no more.

Isbel Beattie was 'fey,' they said, and would take no advice. Lads tight and trig stood in rows to wait for her as she came out of the kirk, on fine Sabbath days when the lilac blossoms, white and purple, were out, and there was a drooping sprig in every spruce bachelor's coat. But Isbel passed them all by with a toss of her head. She could have married a rather stupid young farmer of the best intentions and unquestioned solvency had she so chosen. But Isbel was 'fey,' and would take counsel from neither maid nor matron.

Now Timothy Kelly, the weasel-faced Irish harvestman, wormed his way into the girl's affections by ways of his own, as before and after he had undone many a trebly-fastened door with his steel picklock.

From that day until the hour of her death Isbel Beattie saw no good day. A week after they were married, Timothy Kelly was drinking Isbel's last half-year's wages in a public-house, and Isbel was crying at home with a bruised cheek. She sang no more late or early; but learned to endure hardness and to pray that the kind Lord of whom she had heard in the kirk, might send a swift and easy death as the best thing to pray for.

Timothy Kelly was not long in Ormiland ere he removed to Edinburgh in the interests of business. He needed the metropolis for the exercise of his talents. So Isbel packed what he had left her, and followed him, faithful and weary-foot, to the city lane, and Timothy Kelly cursed her over his shoulder all the way. But she did not hear him, and his words did not hurt her. God had stopped her ears. For the sound of a dearer voice was in them, and the promise of the Eden joy answered Isbel, as though the Lord Almighty walked with her through the streets of the city in the cool of the day.

A week after an infant lay on the breast of Isbel Kelly, in a garret up Meggat's Close, off the Pleasance. A kindly neighbour looked in now and then when Tim Kelly was out, and comforted the young mother. When Tim came in he cursed them all impartially. His foul words sent the neighbours forth again, full of pity and indignation; and so he cast himself down to sleep off drink and temper on the couch of rags in the corner.

Towered fair-faced Edinburgh and its seething underworld held no man like Timothy Kelly. A sieve-net might have been drawn through it and no worse rascal caught than he. Cruel only where he dared with impunity to be cruel, plausible and fawning where it

was to his interest so to be, Timothy Kelly was a type of the criminal who lives to profit by the strange infatuations of the weakest women. From silly servant girls at kitchen doors who thought him 'a most civil-spoken young man,' he obtained the professional information which enabled him to make unrecognised but accurate lists of the family silver upon some stormy midnight, when the policemen stood in doorways, or perambulated the city with their helmets down upon their brows.

Isbel Kelly wore thin and white, and the bruises on her face grew chronic, only occasionally changing the side. For in this matter Timothy Kelly had no weak partiality. Yet, in the midst of all, Cleg Kelly gained in years and strength, his mother many a time shielding him from blows with her own frail body. There was a soft light on her face when she looked at him. When her husband was out Isbel watched Cleg all day long as he lay on the bed and kicked with sturdy limbs, or sprawled restlessly about the house. The dwelling was not extensive. It consisted of one room, and Tim Kelly's 'hidie holes,' where he kept the weapons of his craft—curious utensils, with iron crab fingers set at various angles upon the end of steel stalks.

Now, it is the strangest, yet one of the commonest, things in this world that Isbel Kelly loved her husband, and at the worst times said no word against him. It was a mistake. She ought to have outfaced him, insulted him, defied him, given him blow for blow. Then he might have been a reasonably decent husband, according to the standard of Meggat's Close.

But Cleg Kelly made no such mistake. From the time that he was a little toddling fellow till the parish buried his mother, Cleg Kelly looked at his father with level brows of hate and scorn. No one had taught him; but the perception of youth gauged the matter unerringly.

There are but two beings in the universe whom a really bad-hearted man cannot deceive: his Maker and a young child. Cleg Kelly never quailed before his father. Neither words nor blows daunted him. Whenever his father went out, he said:

'Bad mannie gone away, minnie!'

'Na, Cleg,' said his mother, 'ye mauna speak that way o' yer faither!'

'Bad mannie, minnie!' Cleg repeated determinedly; 'bad mannie gone away.'

And from this she could not move him.

Then as soon as his father began to beat the lad, and his mother was not able to protect him, Cleg developed a marvellous litheness and speed. He could climb roofs like a cat at five years of age, and watch his father from the ledge of an outlying wall or the side of a reeking chimney-can, where even the foot of the practised burglar dared not venture.

Then came a year black and bitter. It was the year of the small-pox. That part of Edinburgh where the Kellys lived became a walled city. There was one death in every three or four attacked. And Tim Kelly went to the seaside for his health.

But Isbel and her boy battled it out alone. She had seven shillings a week for cleaning a day-school. But soon the schools were closed, and her pay ceased. Nevertheless, she earned money somehow, and the minister of the McGill-Gillespie church visited her. It would take a whole treatise on Church History, and a professor thereof, to tell why that church was called the McGill-Gillespie. But the unlearned may be assured that these excellent gentlemen were not canonised Scottish saints, nor were their effigies worshipped inside. But at this time the minister of the church came very near to being worshipped outside.

The children knew his step, and ran—to, not *from*, him. He was the only man, except the doctor, at whom the urchins of Meggat's did not fling dirt. One of these had even been known to touch his hat to the minister of McGill-Gillespie. But this was a great risk, and of course he did not do it when any one was looking.

One day Cleg Kelly sickened, and though at the time he was a great boy of six, his mother carried him about in her arms all day, soothing him. And the hot dry spots burned ever brighter on his cheeks, and his eyes shone like flame. The minister brought the doctor, for they hunted in couples—these two. Some of the ministers had gone to the seaside with Timothy Kelly, and along with them a few great professional men from the West-End. But the Pleasance doctor, a little fair man, and the minister of McGill-Gillespie, a tall dark man, remained with the small-pox. Also God was there—not very evidently, or obtrusively, perhaps; but the minister of McGill-Gillespie knew where to find Him when He was wanted.

And He was needed badly enough in the sick-room of Cleg Kelly. No doubt Cleg ought to have gone to the hospital. But, for one thing, the hospitals were overcrowded. And, for another, if they had taken Cleg, they might have taken his mother also.

At all events Cleg was nursed in his home, while his father remained at the seaside for his health.

One night, when the trouble was at its height, Cleg ran deliriously on about 'the bad mannie.' His mother stilled and tended him. The doctor ordered a little warm wine to be given to Cleg occasionally, and the minister of McGill-Gillespie had brought it. But Cleg wavered between life and death in spite of the wine—and much nearer death than life. Isbel had seen the doctor earlier in the day, and she was to go for him again if a certain anticipated change did not come within six hours. The change did not come, though the mother never took her eyes off her boy. Cleg lay back on his pallet bed, inert and flaccid, his eyes glassy and fixed in his head. His mother softly closed the door, took her shawl over her head, and fled through the midnight streets to the doctor's house.

A sudden summer storm had arisen off the sea. The wind swirled about the old many-gabled closes of Edinburgh. It roared over the broken fortress line of the Salisbury Crag. The streets were deserted. The serried ash-buckets were driven this way and that by the gale. Random cats scudded from doorstep to cellar, dipped, and disappeared. *Clash!* fell a great shutter on the pavement before her. Isbel Kelly was at the doctor's door. He was not in. Would she leave a message? She would, and the message was that a little boy was sinking, and that unless the doctor came quickly a mother's only son would die. She cried out in agony as she said it, but the wind swirled the cry away.

So through the turmoil of the storm she came back, and ran up the evil-smelling dark stairs, where the banister was broken, and only the wind-blown flier of the gas-lamp outside, flickering through the glassless windows of the stairway, lighted her upwards. She had once been a milkmaid, but she had forgotten how the cowslips smelled. And only in her dreams did she recall the scent of beehives over the wall on a still summer night.

She opened the door with a great yearning, but with no presentiment of evil.

'Tim!' she said, her face whitening.

A man, weasel-faced and hateful to look upon, stood by the little cupboard. He had a purse in his hand, and a bottle stood on the mantelshelf beside him.

'Oh, Tim!' she cried, 'for the Lord's sake dinna tak' my last shillin'—no frae me an' the boy. He's deenin', Tim!'

She ran forward as if to beseech him to give the money back to her ; but Tim Kelly, reckless with drink, snatched up the minister's wine-bottle and it met his wife's temple with a dull sound. The woman fell in a heap. She lay loosely on the floor by the wall, and did not even moan. Tim Kelly set the bottle to his lips to drain the last dregs with an empty laugh. But from the bed something small and white flew at his throat.

'Bad mannie, bad mannie, bad mannie !' a shrill voice cried. And before Tim Kelly could set down the bottle, the little figure in flying swathings had dashed itself again and again upon him, biting and gnashing on him like a wolf's cub. For the blood of Tim Kelly was in the lad, as well as the blood of the milkmaid who lay on the floor as one dead.

And this was what the doctor found, when he stumbled up the stair and opened the door. He had seen many strange things in his day, but none so terrible as this. He does not care to speak about it, though he told the minister that either Providence or the excitement had probably saved the child's life. Yet for all that he tended Timothy Kelly, when his turn came, as well as the best of paying patients. For Tim's was an interesting case, with many complications.

So this adventure tells the reason of three things very important to be known in this history—why, six months after, Isbel Kelly was glad to die, why Cleg Kelly hated his father, and why smooth-faced Tim, who had once deceived the servant girls, was ever after a deeply pock-marked man.

What it does not tell is, why God permitted it all.

ADVENTURE IV.

HOW ISBEL KELLY HEARD SWEET MUSIC.

CLEG KELLY did not die just then, which was in some ways a good thing. But neither did his mother Isbel, which, for herself, was a pity. It was also a mistake for society, for then Tim Kelly might also have died for the want of a nurse, and Providence and the city authorities would have been saved a vast deal of trouble.

But in spite of all boasts to the contrary, this is so little a free country that people cannot always die when they want—some not even when they ought to. And not a few have got themselves into trouble for assisting manifest destiny. But no one, not even

the chief constable, would have been sorry had Isbel Beattie forgotten to help Tim Kelly, her husband, at some crisis of his disease, so that he might have gone betimes to his own place, and thus have been compelled to leave alone a great number of other places and things with which he had no proper concern.

But Isbel Kelly did not think of that. Moreover, Tim Kelly behaved himself better as an invalid than he had ever done as a whole man. And as for little Cleg, he got better rapidly in order to get out of his father's way.

But there came a day when both her invalids were out of her hands, and Isbel had time to clean her house and give her attention to dying on her own account. She did not wish to put any one to an inconvenience. But, indeed, there was little else left for her to do. Tim Kelly was again able to attend to his business—which, strictly speaking, consisted in the portorage of other people's goods out of their houses, without previous arrangement with the owners, and in a manner as unobtrusive as possible.

Cleg was too young for this profession, but according to his father's friends his day was coming. In the meantime he spent most of the day in a brickyard at the back. For Tim Kelly, owing to a little difficulty as to rent, had moved his household goods from Meggat's Close to the outskirts of the city. Now they do not use many bricks about Edinburgh; but there are exceptions, especially in the direction of Leith, and this was the place where they made the exceptions.

The brickyard was a paradise to Cleg Kelly in the warm days of summer. The burning bricks made a strange misty fume of smoke in the air, which was said to be healthy. People who could not afford to go to Portobello for convalescence brought their children to the brickyard. They made drain-pipes and other sanitary things there; and on that account also the brickyard was accounted healthy for people in the position of the Kellys.

At any rate Cleg Kelly was well content, and he played there from morn to night. His mother generally watched him from a window. There was but one window in the little 'rickle of brick' which their pawnbroking Jew landlord called a 'commodious cottage.' He might call it what he liked. He never got any rent for it from Tim Kelly.

Yet Isbel was happier here than in the city. At least she could see the trees, and she had neighbours who came in to visit her when her husband was known to be from home.

'Eh, Mistress Kelly, I wonder ye can pit up wi' sic a man,' said the wife of Joe Turner, a decent man steadily employed on the brickfields, who only drank half his wages.

Isbel signed frantically towards the bed with her hand. But without noticing her signals of distress, the innocent Mrs. Turner went on with the burden of her tale.

'Gin I had sic a man, I wad tak' him to bits an' pit him up again anew—the black-hearted scoondrel o' a red-headed Irishman!'

Tim Kelly rose from the bed where he had been resting himself. They do not set a bed in a room in that country. They put it down outside a room and build it round on three sides. Then they cover the remaining side in with as many cloths as possible, for the purpose of keeping out the air. From such a death-trap Tim Kelly rose slowly, and confronted Mistress Turner.

'Get out av me house, Mistrhess Turner, afore I break the thick skull av yer ill-conditioned face,' said Tim, whose abuse was always of the linked and logical kind.

'Deed an' I'll gang oot o' yer hoose wi' pleasure, Timothy Kelly; gin I had kenned that the likes o' ye was in it, Mary Turner wad never hae crossed yer doorstep.'

'Well, now that ye are here, be afther takin' yersilf acrost the durestip, as suddent an' comprehensive-like as ye can—wid yer brazen face afore ye an' yer turned-up nose in the air. When ye are wanted bad in this house, ye'll get an invite wid a queen's pictur' on it an' me kyard!' said Tim Kelly, sarcastically.

Mary Turner betook herself to the door, in a manner as dignified as it is possible to retain when retreating with one's face to the foe. But when she got there, she put her arms akimbo and opened the vials of her wrath on Tim Kelly. The neighbours came to the doors to listen. It was a noble effort, and the wives remembered some of Mistress Turner's phrases long after, and reproduced them every fortnight upon pay-nights, for the benefit of their husbands when they came home with only eleven intact shillings out of twenty-three.

But Tim Kelly hardly troubled to reply. He only said that Mary Turner was a brass-faced old Jezebel, a statement which he repeated several times, because he observed that it provoked on each occasion a fresh burst of the Turnerian vocabulary.

Tim Kelly never wasted animosity. After all, Mistress Turner was not his wife, and there were other means of getting even with her. He could win money at cards from her husband, or he

could teach her son, Jamie, who had just left school, a fine new game with the lock of a door and one of his curious pronged hooks. There are more ways of killing a cat than drowning it in cream—also many deaths less agreeable to the cat. So Tim Kelly bided his time.

But for some reason Tim Kelly grew less unkind to his wife than he had ever been, since those terrible days when in Ormiland parish bonny Isbel Beattie grew 'fey.'

It was said that Tim was afraid of his son Cleg. At any rate, certain it is that he beat his wife no more, and very occasionally he even gave her a little money. So in her heart Isbel Kelly counted these good days, and sometimes she could almost have wished to live a little longer.

It was not often that Cleg stayed in the house with her. That she did not expect. But at all times of the day she could see him, rushing about the brickfield, sometimes piling bricks into castles; at other times helping Jo Turner; then again playing at marbles for 'keeps' in the red dust of the yard, with the sun pouring down upon his head. It was a constant marvel to Isbel that he was never tired. She was always tired.

Sometimes Cleg Kelly fought, and then his mother called him in. He always came—after the fight was over. He still wore a hat of straw with a hole in it, or rather he wore a hole with a little rim of hat round it. He loved his mother, and, on the whole, attended to what she told him. He did not steal anything of value, nor would he go near Hare's public. He did not tell more lies than were just and necessary. He minded his mother's wants, and was on the whole a fairly good boy, as boys go down by the Easter Beach brickyard. The standard was not an exacting one.

'Mind, now, Cleg, when I gang awa', ye are to bide wi' your faither, an' no cross him ower sair. He is your faither, mind, an' I leave him to you.'

Cleg promised—to please his mother, but he loved his other parent none the more. The next time he saw him come home drunk, he clouted him with a paving-stone from behind the yard wall. He excused himself by saying his mother was not gone away yet.

This was the lesson Isbel taught Cleg every day when he came in to his scanty meals, many of which good Mistress Turner slipped into the house under her apron, when the 'brute beast and red-headed gorilla' of her anathema was known to be out of the way.

After a while there came an afternoon when Isbel Kelly felt strangely quiet. It was a drowsy day, and the customary sounds of the brickfield were hushed in the doze of the afternoon sun. Outside it was hot with an intense heat, and a kind of pale bluish smother rose off the burning bricks. The reek of the kilns drifted across the fields, too lazy to rise through the slumberous sunshine. The whole yard radiated blistering heat like an oven.

Isbel sat by the window in a chair which Tim had made during his convalescence; for he was exceedingly handy with tools, and during those days he had nothing worse to do.

She made the house as tidy as she could compass during the morning hours, steadying herself with one hand on the walls as she went about. Cleg, of course, was playing outside. He had come racing in for his dinner with a wisp of hair sticking out of the hole in his hat. Isbel smoothed it down, and because her hand touched him like a caress Cleg put it from him, saying, 'Dinna, mother; somebody nicht see ye!'

It was hot, and the boy was a little irritable; but his mother understood.

Then, as he took the plate of broth, he told his mother all that had happened in the brickfield that day. He had carried clay for Jo, and Jo had given him a penny. Then he had been at a rat-hunt with the best terrier in the world. He had also chased Michael Hennessy twice round the yard after a smart bout of fisticuffs. Thereupon, the men had cheered him, and called him a 'perfect wull-cat'—which Cleg took to be a term of praise, and cherished as a soldier does the 'penn'orth o' bronze' which constitutes the Victoria Cross.

Isbel only sat and rested and listened. Tim was away for the day, she knew not where, and the minutes Cleg remained indoors and talked to her were her sole and sufficient pleasure. She thanked the Lord for each one of them. But she never called the boy in against his will, nor yet held him longer than he cared to stay.

Yet, somehow, on this day Isbel was more eager than usual to detain her son. She clung to him with a strange kind of yearning. But as soon as Cleg had finished his bread and soup he snatched up his white straw hat-brim and raced out, crying, as he ran, 'T'mawa', mither—Tam Gillivray has stealed my auld basin withoot the bottom.'

This was a serious offence, and Cleg went down in haste to avenge the insult. Soon there was the noise of battle below—

chiefly, however, the noise of them that shout for the mastery; and then, in a little, when the bottomless basin had been recovered by its rightful owner, the noise of them that cry for being overcome.

From the window Isabel watched. Her thin hair fell over her wasted temples, and she pressed her hand on her breast, searching as though something were missing there. And so there was. It was about a lung and a half which she missed. Nevertheless there had fallen a peace upon Isabel to which she had been unaccustomed. Faint tremors ran through her body, and though the window was wide open, she often gasped for breath. A blissful, painless weariness stole over her.

Cleg was playing below. He had achieved a victory, complete, yet not quite bloodless, for Tam Gillivray was staunching his nose at the smith's cauldron with a lump of cold iron at the back of his neck. Cleg, prancing in haughty state and followed by a little train of admirers, was now dragging the basin in triumph round the yard. He was pretending that it was a railway train drawn by an engine of extremely refractory disposition, which curvetted and reared in a most unenginely manner.

Isbel watched him from her window.

'He is happy, puir laddie—maybe happier than he'll ever be again. Let him bide a wee. I'll gie him a cry, in time.'

Then she looked again. She prayed a little while with her eyes shut. Beneath, Cleg was holding his court. He had crowned himself with the basin, and pulled his hair through it in the shape of a plume. As an appropriate finish for the whole, he had stuck the mop of protruding locks full of feathers, and now he was presiding over a court of justice at which Michael Hennessy was being tried for his life on the charge of murdering a 'yellow yoit.' In due course the verdict of justifiable homicide was returned, and the culprit sentenced to kill another, or be belted round the brickyard.

Then, wearying for a fresher ploy, the boys decided to build a fortress, and instantly, as soon as they had thought of it, they set to work with a mountain of refuse bricks, Cleg Kelly putting no hand to the manual labour, but being easily first in the direction of affairs. This 'gaffership' suited Cleg so well that he turned three excellent wheels in the greatness of his content, and then immediately knocked over several boys for presuming to imitate him, when they ought to have been fulfilling orders and building bricks into a fortress.

From the window his mother still watched him. She smiled to see his light-heart joy, and said again, as if to herself, 'In a while I shall cry to him—I dinna need him yet!'

All about there grew up in her ears a sound of sweet music, as of the many singers at the kirk on still, warm Sabbath days, singing the psalms which she remembered long ago in Ormiland, only they sounded very far away. And at times the brickyard reeled and dazzled, the arid trodden ground and steaming bricks fell back, the cracked walls opened out, and she saw the sun shining upon golden hills, the like of which she had never seen before.

'What is this? Oh, what's this?' she asked herself aloud, and the sound of her own voice was in her ears as the roaring of many waters.

It seemed to her to be almost time now. She leaned forward wearily to call her son to help her. But he was sitting on a throne in the midst of his castle, dressed as Robin Hood, with all his merry men about him. He looked so happy, and he laughed so loud, that Isabel said again to herself—

'I can manage yet for half an hour, and then I shall cry to him.'

But her son caught sight of her at the window. He was so elated that he did not mind noticing his mother, as a common boy would have done. He waved his hand to her, calling out loud—

'Mither, mither, I'm biggin' a bonny hoose for ye to leeve in!'

Isabel smiled, and it was as if the sun which shone on the hills of her dream had touched her thin face and made it also beautiful for the last time before sundown.

'My guid boy—my nice boy,' she said, 'the Lord will look till him! He said he was biggin' a hoose for his mither. Let him big his hoose. In an hour I shall cry to him—my ain laddie!'

Yet in an hour she did not cry, and it was the only time she had ever broken her word to her son.

But that was because Isabel Kelly had journeyed where no crying is. Neither shall there be any more pain.

ADVENTURE V.

THE BRIGANDS OF THE CITY.

CLEG KELLY's mother lay still in her resting grave, and had no more need of pity. Cleg abode with his father in the tumble-down shanty by the brickfield at Easter Beach, and asked for no

pity either. Cleg had promised his mother, Isabel, that he would not forsake his father.

'Na, I'll no rin awa' frae ye,' so he told his father, frankly, 'for I promised my mither; but gin ye lick me, I'll pit my wee knife intil ye when ye are sleepin'! Mind ye that!'

And his father minded, which was fortunate for both.

Cleg was now eleven, and much respected by his father, who fully believed that he was speaking the truth. Tim Kelly, snow-shoveller, feared his son Cleg with his sudden wild-cat fierceness, much more than he feared God—more, even, than he feared Father Donnelly, to whom he went twice a year to ease his soul of a portion of his more specially heinous sins.

Yet Tim Kelly was a better man, because of the respect in which he held his son. He even boasted of Cleg's cleverness when he was safe among his old cronies in Mother Flannigan's kitchen, or in the bar-parlour at Hare's public.

'Shure, there's not the like av him in this kingdom av ignorant blockheads. My Clig's the natest and the illigantest gossoon that stips in his own boot-leather. Shure, he can lick anything at all near his own weight. Sorra's in him, he can make his ould man stand about. Faith, 'tis him that's goin' to be the great man intoirely, is our little Clig.'

These were the opinions of his proud father.

But Jim Carnochan, better known as the 'Devil's Lickpot,' demurred. If Cleg were so clever a boy, why was he not set to work? A boy so smart ought long ere this to have been learning the profession. To this Mother Flannigan agreed, for she shared in the profits.

'My Peether, rest his sowl for a good lad—him as was hanged be token of false evidence—and the bobbies findin' the gintleman's goold watch in Peether's pocket, was at wurk whin he was six years av his age. Take my wurrd for it, Timothy Kelly, there never yet was a thruely great man that didn't begin his education young.'

'Maybe,' said Tim, 'and that's the raison, Misthress Flannigan, that so few av them grew up to be ould men.'

'Gin he was my boy,' said Sandy Telfer, whose occupation was breaking into houses during the summer holidays (one of the safest 'lays' in the profession, but looked down upon as mean-spirited), 'I wad be haein' him through the windows and openin' the front doors every dark nicht.'

'Ah, you wud, wud ye?' replied Tim Kelly contemptuously; 'you're the great boy to talk, you that has no more manhud in ye than a draff-sack wid a hole in it. Yuss, ye can do yer dirty way wid your own mane-spirited spalpeens, wid no more spunk than a dure-mat. But I'd have ye know that my Clig cud make hares av you an' ivvery Telfer av the lot o' ye—hear to me now!'

And Tim Kelly shook his fist within an inch of the nose of Sandy Telfer, who, not being a man of war, showed by the curl of his nostril and the whitening of his lip, that he did not find the bouquet of Tim Kelly's bunch-of-fives an agreeable perfume. Tim Kelly waited to see if on any pretext he could bring his fist into closer contact with Sandy Telfer's face, but he found no cause.

'My Clig,' he said emphatically, 'is goin' to be a great character. He is jist the boy that is to climb the top laddher av the profession. It's his father that must be out at night, an' run the risk av the dirty bobby wid his lantern, an' the gintleman av the house in his night-shirt wid a cruel poker. But Clig shall sit safe and aisy in his chair, an' make his thousands a year wid the scrap av his pen. He'll promothe companies, an' be out av the way when they burst. He'll write so illegant that he cud turn ye off another gintleman's signathure as fast as his own, an' worth a deal more on a bit av paper than anny av our names——'

'Come away hame, faither, sittin' bletherin' there. Ye hae been here lang enough.'

It was the face of Cleg Kelly, dirty, sharp, and good-natured, which appeared at the door of the boozing ken.

Mistress Flannigan caught up a pound weight and threw it at Cleg with a woman's aim. It flew wide, and would surely have smashed some of the unclean vessels standing ready for the wash on the dresser, had Cleg not stepped briskly within, and, catching the missile deftly, made a low bow as he laid it on the table, and said, with his rare disarming smile—

'Your obedient servant, Cleg Kelly!'

'Hear to him now, the young bliggard!' cried his delighted and well-intoxicated father. 'He has come to arm the ould man bome, an' the ould man'll have to be stippin' too when Clig gives the wurd.'

Isbel Kelly had indeed been a happy woman if, ten years ago, she had learned Cleg's method.

'Come on, faither,' reiterated Cleg, who had again retreated to the door, for he had no liking for the company or the place.

Tim Kelly got himself on his feet unsteadily, and lurched towards the door. His son caught him deftly on the descending swoop.

'Steady, faither, mind the stair. Gie us yer han'.'

And so Cleg got Timothy, his father, who deserved no such care, tenderly up the filthy exit of Mistress Flannigan's cellar.

'Tim's not the man he was,' Sandy Telfer said, as the pair went out.

'It's fair undecent doin' as the boy bids him, an' never so much as puttin' the laddie to an honest bit o' wark. Ah, he'll suffer for that, or a' be dune! They'll be raisons annexed to that,' continued the summer housebreaker, who had been respectably brought up on the Shorter Catechism, but who, owing to a disappointment in love, had first of all joined another denomination, and, the change not answering its purpose, had finally taken to housebreaking and drink.

'Ye may say so, indeed,' said Bridget Flannigan.

So Cleg took his father home to the rickety house by the brickyard. Cleg kept the room clean as well as he could. But the sympathetic neighbour, who remembered his mother, occasionally took a turn round the place with a scrubbing-brush when it was absolutely certain that the 'red-headed gorilla' was absent, attending to other people's business.

Whenever Cleg saw his father refrain from Hare's public and the evening sessions of Mistress Flannigan's interesting circle, he knew that Tim had a project on hand. Generally he took no particular heed to these. For it was his custom, as soon as he saw his father off on any of his raids, to go and report himself casually at the nearest police-station, where the sergeant's wife knew him. She often gave him a 'piece' with sugar on it, having known his mother before ever she left the parish of Ormiland.

The sergeant's wife remembered her own happy escape from being Mrs. Timothy Kelly, and though her heart had been sore against Isbel at the time, she had long forgotten the feeling in thankfulness that her lines had fallen on the right side of the law. But she had never confided to the sergeant that she had once known Tim Kelly somewhat intimately.

Cleg did not mean to be mixed up in any of his father's ill-doings if he could help it, so upon these occasions he frequented the precincts of the police-station as much as the sergeant's wife would let him.

It was his custom to take his 'piece'—an excellent thick slice

of bread with brown sugar on it—and seat himself on a luxurious paling opposite to eat it. The fact that a great many message boys passed that way may have had something to do with Cleg's choice of locality. Cleg liked to be envied. And, seeing the 'piece,' more than one boy was sure to give chase. This introduced a healthy variety into Cleg's life. He liked to fool with these young men of the message basket. Exercise sharpens the appetite, and when this morning the butcher's boy chivvied him over the parched-up grass field that lay between the station and the brickyard, Cleg fairly whooped in his joy.

At first he ran slowly, and apparently with great alarm, so that the butcher's boy had not the least doubt that he easily could catch him. Cleg held the sergeant's wife's 'piece' in his hand as he ran, so that the butcher's boy could see the thick sugar on the top of the yellow butter. This stirred up the pursuer's desires, and he made a spurt to seize Cleg. Had the assailant been the grocer's boy, to whom sugar and butter were vain things, Cleg would have had to try another plan. Now, when the butcher's boy spurted, Cleg almost let himself be caught. He heard close behind him the labouring of the avenger. With a sudden rush he sped thirty yards in front; then he turned and ran backwards, eating the sergeant's wife's 'piece' as he ran. This aggravated the butcher's boy to such an extent that he had to stop with his hand on his panting side, and curse Cleg's parentage—which, sad to relate, pleased Cleg more than anything. He said it was prime. By which he meant, not the sergeant's wife's 'piece,' but the whole situation, and especially the disgust of the butcher's boy.

Then Cleg, being contented, offered honourable terms, for he and the butcher's boy were in reality very good friends. He gave his late pursuer a fair half of the bread and sugar, but reserved the crust for himself. So, munching amicably, Cleg and the butcher's boy returned together to the paling on which Cleg had been sitting.

But, alas! during his temporary absence from his care, Tam Luke, the baker's boy, had come along. And in pursuit of the eternal feud between butchers' boys and bakers' boys, he had overturned the basket and rolled the meat on the road. Luke was now sitting on the rail a little way along, smoking a pipe loaded with brown paper, with a kind of ostentatious calmness.

When half across the field the butcher's boy observed the insult to his basket. Yet he said nothing till he came quite near. Then, in the most friendly manner possible, he seized the defiled leg of

mutton, destined for the dinner of an eminent Doctor in Divinity, and hit Tam Luke a swinging blow over the head with it, which not only broke that youth's pipe, but for a season spoiled the shape of his mouth, and tumbled him incontinently over the fence.

The baker's boy rose, shedding freely bits of clay pipe and exceedingly evil words. A battle royal seemed imminent to one who did not know the commonplaces of friendly intercourse among these worthies. But the baker's boy contented himself with stating over and over in varied and ornamental language, highly metaphorical in parts, what he would do to the butcher's boy if he hit him again. However, the butcher's boy had too great an advantage in handling Professor Hinderlands' leg of mutton, and the tempest gradually blew itself out.

Whereupon all parties betook themselves to a street pump to wash the various articles which had been strewed in the mire, and to dry them on the butcher's boy's blue-striped apron, which he wore girt about him like a rope. It was a highly instructive sight. And had the cooks of various respectable families seen the process, they would have had a sufficient answer to their frequent indignant question that morning, 'What can be keeping Cleaver's young vaigabond?'

Also, had they happened to pass, a number of the good ladies who sat down so comfortably to enjoy their dinners (which they called 'lunch' if anybody happened to call) would certainly have gone without the principal course.

But the butcher's boy and the baker's boy were not in the least distressed. Such things happened every day. It was all in the way of business. And as for our hero, he, as we have indicated before, merely remarked, in his vulgar way, that it was prime.

So far he had had a good, interesting day, and was exceedingly pleased with himself.

Presently all three went and calmly smoked on the side of the road, roosting contentedly on the paling, while Tam Luke, who had got a prize for good reading at the school, drew out of his pocket 'The Bully Boys' Budget'—an international journal of immense circulation, which described the adventures of associated bands of desperate ruffians (aged, on an average, nine) in New York, a city which Cleaver's loon looked upon as a boys' Paradise. Boys were discouraged in Edinburgh. They got no chance of distinguishing themselves.

'It's a most mighty queer thing,' said Cleg, 'that the story says, if Tam Luke reads it richt——'

'I'll smash yer tawtie heid!' remarked that gentleman, mightily offended at the insinuation.

'If Tam Luke reads it richt,' continued Cleg, 'that in New York the bobbies rin frae the boys; but here the boys rin frae the bobbies like fun.'

'Me?' said Cleaver's boy. 'I wadna rin for ony bobby in the hale toon.'

'An' me,' cried Tam Luke, with mighty contempt, 'I lickit a big bobby the nicht afore yestreen. I could fecht a bobby wi' yae hand tied ahint my back.'

'Bobbies are nane sic bad folks. The sergeant's wife over there gied me a "piece,"' said Cleg gratefully.

'Ye are a reid-heided Irish traitor!' said the butcher's boy with emphasis.

'It's my faither that's reid-heided,' said Cleg promptly; 'but tak' that ony way for speaking ill o' the family!'

And with the back of his hand he knocked the libeller of his forbears over into the field.

'I'm gaun to be captain o' a band o' robbers—will ye baith join?' said Tam Luke.

Cleaver's boy was about to wreak his vengeance on Cleg from the other side of the fence, but he paused with his arm suspended to think over the proposal.

'I'm gaun to be captain o' a band mysel'! Will ye join?' said the butcher's boy to Cleg, instead of assaulting him as he had first intended.

'What to do?' asked practical Cleg.

'To fecht the poliss, of course!' cried the butcher's boy and the baker's boy together. Their unanimity was wonderful.

'*There's the sergeant the noo!*' said Cleg quietly, pointing across the road.

And it was indeed the sergeant, who, having been on night duty, had just risen and strolled out to see what kind of weather it was.

The valiant captains of the decimating bands which were to terrorise the police of the city, descended from their several roosts with one mind, seized their baskets, and sped round opposite corners with amazing speed.

Cleg Kelly was left alone, sitting on the paling. He pulled

out what remained of his crust, and as he ate it with relish, he laughed aloud and kicked his heels with glee, so that the sergeant, stretching himself after his day-sleep, called across to the boy—

‘What’s up wi’ ye, Cleg? Ye seem to be enjoyin’ yoursel!’

But all the answer he could get out of Cleg was just, ‘O man, sergeant, it’s prime!’

But as to whether he meant the crust or only things in general, the sergeant was none the wiser.

ADVENTURE VI.

CLEG TURNS BURGLAR.

CLEG had watched his father furtively all day. Little conversation passed between these two. Cleg devoted much of his time to a consideration of the best means of legitimate gain in his new profession of capitalist. He possessed the large sum of one shilling and a penny. It was banked upon sound old principles in the hollow end of a brick, which was buried under a flag in the back-yard of a brewery. Cleg had hidden it with mystic incantations, and now carried a red worsted thread twisted round his finger to remind him of its whereabouts.

But there was another reason besides his large capital, why Cleg was unusually watchful of his father that day. First of all, Tim Kelly had come home sober from Hare’s public the night before. That was a suspicious circumstance in itself. It showed not only that his ready cash had all been liquefied, but that Mistress Hare had drawn a line under the big chalk score behind her door. This line was the intimation that the single file of figures must be wiped off before another dram was served.

‘Ye’ve had Larry on your back long enough, sure, Tim!’ said Mistress Hare, who regulated these matters in person. ‘Idleness is a most deadly sin, Father Malony sez!’ continued the landlady devoutly.

‘Shure, an’ it’s not the divil’s sin, thin, Mistress Hare,’ said Tim acutely, ‘for he’s busy enough!’

Tim was the only burglar with a brogue in the city, and as such was dear to the heart of Mistress Hare. For the Scot, when he takes to the investigation of other people’s houses, does so grimly and without romance. But Tim had always a hint of Celtic imagination and even of poetry in his creations.

For instance, all that day on which Cleg kept his eye on his father, Tim was meditating a raid on the house of Mr. Robert Grey Tennant, a comfortable burgess of the burgh, who for the ease of his later life had built himself—not a lordly pleasure house indeed, but a comfortable mansion of Craigleith stone, exactly like three hundred and sixty-five other mansions on the south side of the city.

There was at the back of Aurelia Villa a little bordering of flowers and strawberries. These, however, never came to much, for the cats broke the flowers and extraneous boys stole the strawberries. There was also a little green plot, big enough for parlour croquet, but not big enough for lawn-tennis. Yet this did not prevent the serious-minded and inventive young woman of the house, Miss Cecilia Tennant, from frequently playing what she called 'pocket-handkerchief tennis' on this scraplet of lawn. And it was indeed a lively game, when two or three of her admirers arrived with racquets and rubber shoes to engage in silk-striped summer strife.

When a couple of champions of the Blackhouse Club met on the same side of the net, they winked at each other, and amusement struggled with politeness within them. But when each one of their services came near to annihilating an opponent's nose, and as they sent their returns out of court and over boundary walls with monotonous regularity, they changed their minds. Especially was this so when Miss Cecilia Tennant and a certain Junior Partner in a mercantile concern in the town, put in with equal certainty neat services and returns, dropping the balls unexpectedly into odd corners as if playing with egg spoons. They asked the Junior Partner how he did it. The Junior Partner said it was native genius. But perhaps the undisclosed fact that Cecilia Tennant and he played together three nights out of six on that lawn had rather more to do with it. Pocket-handkerchief tennis is certainly convenient for some things. It keeps the players very close to one another, except when they fall out—an advantage which it shares with ballooning.

But Tim Kelly was not interested in this house because of the desirable young men who played tennis there, nor yet because of any love of the young woman for whose sweet sake they bought new scarves and frequented the neighbourhood on the chance of a casual meeting. On the contrary, Timothy was after the spoons. Hall-marked silver was his favourite form of sport. And for this he had all the connoisseur's eagerness and appreciation.

His son was, on the contrary, exceedingly interested in the house itself. He was the most fervent of Miss Cecilia Tennant's admirers, though he had never told her so. This peculiarity he shared with a great many other young gentlemen, including every male teacher except two (already attached) in Hunker Court school.

Yet in spite of all this affection, before midnight of that autumn night, Cleg Kelly, future Christian, became a burglar—and that upon the premises of his benefactress, Miss Cecilia Tennant. It happened in this wise.

Tim sat all day on the floor of his house at home. He did so from necessity, not from choice. For his apartment was airily furnished in the Japanese fashion, with little except a couple of old mattresses and as many rugs. There were no chairs. They had been removed during Tim's last absence in the 'Calton' by the landlord in lieu of rent. So Tim sat on the floor and worked with a file among a bundle of keys and curiously constructed tools. There was, for instance, a great lever with a fine thin edge set sideways to slip beneath windows on stormy nights, when the wrench of the hasp from its fastening would not be heard.

There were delicate little keys with spidery legs which Tim looked at with great admiration, and loved more than he had ever loved his wife and all his relations. There were also complicated wrenching implements, with horror latent about them, as though they had come from some big arm-chaired, red-glassed dental surgery. Tim Kelly was putting his tools to rights, and Cleg watched him intently, for he also was a conspirator.

At midday the boy vanished and reported himself at the police-sergeant's. He asked for a 'piece,' and the sergeant's wife told him to be off. She was busy and he might come back when the weans came in for their dinners. She had not time to be always giving the likes of him 'pieces' in the middle of the day.

Cleg did not care. He was not particularly hungry. But he hung about all afternoon in the neighbourhood of the police-station, and so pestered the good-natured policemen off duty, that one of them threatened him with 'a rare belting' if he did not quit.

Whereupon Cleg buttoned up his jacket, made to himself a paper helmet, and with a truncheon in his hand stalked about in front of the station, taking up stray dogs in the name of the law. One of these he had previously taught to walk upon its hind legs. This animal he arrested, handcuffed with a twist of wire, and paraded

over against the station in a manner killingly comic—much to the amusement of the passers-by, as well as detrimental to the sobriety and discipline of the younger officers themselves. But Cleg was seldom meddled with by the police. He was under the protection of the sergeant's wife, who so often gave him a 'piece.' She also gave 'pieces' sometimes to the officers at the station-house. For according as a policeman is fed, so is he. And it was the sergeant's wife who stirred the porridge pot. Therefore Cleg was let alone.

In this manner Cleg amused himself till dark, when he stole home. His father was already coming down the stairs. Cleg rapidly withdrew. His father passed out and took the narrowest lanes southward till he entered the Queen's Park under the immanent gloom of the Salisbury Crag. Cleg followed like his shadow. Tim Kelly often looked behind. He boasted that he could hear the tramp of the regulation police boot at least half a mile, and tell it from the tread of a circus elephant, and even from the one o'clock gun at the Castle. But he saw no silent boy tracking him noiselessly after the fashion of the Indian scout, so vividly described in the 'Bully Boys' Journal.'

Tim Kelly bored his way into the eye of a rousing south wind that 'reeled' among the bare bones of Samson's Ribs, and hurled itself upon Edinburgh as if to drive the city off its long, irregular ridge into the North Sea. Bending sharply to the right, the burglar came among buildings again. He crossed the marshy end of Duddingstone Loch. It was tinder-dry with the drought. At the end of a long avenue was to be seen the loom of houses, and the gleam of lights, as burgess's wife and burgess moved in this order to their bedrooms and disarrayed themselves for the night.

Tim Kelly hid behind a wall. Cleg crouched behind his father, but sufficiently far behind not to attract his attention. Cleg was taking his first lessons in the great craft of speculation—which is the obtaining of your neighbour's goods without providing him with an equivalent in exchange. The trifling matter of your neighbour's connivance, requisite in betting and stock transactions, escaped the notice of the Kellys. But perhaps after all that did not matter.

Aurelia Villa, the home of Miss Cecilia Tennant (incidentally also of her father, Mr. Robert Grey Tennant), darkened down early; for Mr. Robert Tennant was an early riser, and early rising means early bedding (and a very good thing too).

Tim Kelly knew all that, for his local knowledge was as astonishing as his methods of obtaining it were mysterious. It was not twelve of the clock when Tim drew himself over the wall out of the avenue, and dropped lightly as a cat upon the pocket-handkerchief lawn, which all the summer had been worn at the corners by the egg-spoon tennis of Cecilia and the Junior Partner.

Tim Kelly was at the back door in a minute. It was down three steps. He laid a bag of tools, which clinked a little as he took them out of his pocket, on the stone ledge of the step. It might be safer, he thought, to take a look round the house and listen for the hippopotamus tread of the regulation bull-hide. In a moment after Tim was round at the gable end flat among the strawberries. There it came! Clear and solemnising fell the tread of the law in all its majesty—a bull's-eye lantern swinging midships a sturdy girth, which could hardly, even by courtesy, be called a waist. Flash! Like a search-light ran the ray of the lantern over the front of the property of Mr. Robert Grey Tennant.

But the regulation boots were upon the feet of a man of probability. The wearer opened the front gate, tramped up the steps, conscientiously tried the front door and dining-room window of the end house in the row. They were fast. All was well. Duty done. The owners might sleep sound. They paid heavy police rates to a beneficent local authority. Why should they not sleep well? But, alas! the regulation boots did not take any cognisance of Tim Kelly with his nose among the strawberries, or of a small boy who was speeding over the waste fields and back yards into the Park. The small boy carried a parcel. He was a thief. This small boy was Cleg Kelly, the hero of this tale.

Timothy Kelly rose from among the strawberries with laughter and scorn in his heart. If the bobby had only gone to the back door instead of the front, there was a parcel there, which it would have made him a proud policeman to take to the head office. Tim Kelly stooped at the steps to take up his precious satchel of tools. His hand met the bare stone. His bag was gone! His heart dinned suddenly in his ears. This was not less than witchcraft. He had never been ten yards from them all the time. Yet the tools were gone without sound or sight of human being. Then there was an interval.

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During this interval Tim Kelly expressed his opinions upon things in general. The details are quite unfit for publication.

But at that very moment, over at the end of Duddingstone Loch, a small boy was whirling a small but heavy bag round his head.

'Once! Twice! Thrice—and away!' he cried with glee. Something hurtled through the air, and fell with a splash far in the black deeps of the loch. Years after this the antiquary of the thirtieth century may find this bundle, and on the strength of it he will take away the honest character of our ancestors of the Iron Age, proving that burglary was commonly and scientifically practised among them. But the memory of Cleg Kelly will be clear.

Indeed, he was sound asleep when his father came in, breathing out threatenings and slaughter. Tim listened intently with his ear at his son's mouth, for it is well to be suspicious of every one. But Cleg's breathing was as natural and regular as that of an infant.

Yet there is no doubt whatever, that Cleg and not his father had been guilty of both burglary and theft that night; and that Duddingstone Loch was indictable for the reset of the stolen property.

Then Cleg Kelly, burglar, winked an eye at his father's back, and settled himself to sleep the genuine sleep of the just.

(To be continued.)

THE ROMANCE OF VIOLIN COLLECTING.

THERE are very good reasons why an old violin—of course, presuming it to be a good instrument to begin with—is better than a new one, and still better reasons why the Italian violins of the classical period should remain the masterpieces of their kind. First of all there is the wood: that requires to be mellowed by age, and there is no artificial process that can take the place of time in this matter. Vuillaume, the celebrated Parisian maker and dealer, experimented in trying to 'age' the wood, both by chemicals and by baking, but the idea proved worthless. Again, there is the *kind* of wood to be used, and that is not such a simple affair as some people suppose. A violin is made of about fifty-eight separate pieces of wood, and the kind and quality are of the first importance. Let us look at this point a little in detail, for it is not generally understood.

The front of a violin is usually made of deal, the back of maple. Now, a piece of wood can be set in vibration just like a string in tension, and a certain musical note will be the result, the pitch depending, of course, upon the length, thickness, and density of the wood. Well, the curious fact has been established by experiment that in all the best Stradivarius violins—the violins that are now the rage—the 'note' produced by the front of the instrument is the same; and again, that in no case is the note of the front the same as the note of the back. We now know that there are acoustic reasons for this, and these reasons determine the kind and quality of the wood. You want the front of the instrument to be light, soft, and porous, and you take deal as answering best to these qualities. When the wood is dry the microscope will reveal a multitude of little hollow cells, once filled with sap. The more of these cells there are, the more quickly will the wood vibrate to the sound; and here it is that the fine skill in selecting the wood comes in. You might cut up a dozen pieces of deal, and perhaps only one piece would be absolutely perfect for its purpose. Similarly with the maple, of which the back of the instrument is made. This is a harder wood, containing less sap, and, consequently, fewer cells when dry. It is used because it vibrates more slowly than deal, and the effect on the

violin is, as Mr. Haweis puts it, 'to detain the waves of sound radiating from the deal, and to mix them with slower vibrations of the back in the hollow of the instrument.' The ribs and sides of the violin are also of maple, and these serve to connect the quickly vibrating front with the slowly vibrating back, and hold them until both throb together with full pulsation and body of sound.

Now there is abundant evidence to show that the old Italian makers paid particular attention to all these details—or at least, if they did not of set purpose, they did unconsciously by an intuition which amounted to actual genius. Stradivarius and most of the Cremonese makers of the classical period selected their wood from the Tyrol, and it is more than likely that they found some special quality in the timber there which recommended it to their attention. But then, you say, the wood can be selected with equal care, and the details of its combination carried out with equal skill, by the modern maker. Ah! but you forget the ageing; you forget the lost secret of the Cremona varnish; and, above all, you forget the inimitable workmanship of the Cremona masters. Time must finish the artist's work; nay, the very act of playing has a beneficial influence, constraining, as Tyndall expresses it, the molecules of the wood, which in the first instance might be refractory, to conform at last to the requirements of the vibrating strings.

And the varnish—the Cremona varnish? That is a romance and a mystery in itself. Ever since the traces of it finally disappeared, about 1760, violin-makers have been trying to discover the secret, and many chemists have given days and nights in futile attempts to find out its constituents. Charles Reade, who was an enthusiast in the matter of old fiddles, says: 'More than once, even in my time, hopes have run high, but only to fall again. Some have cried "Eureka!" to the public, but the moment others looked at their discovery and compared it with the real thing "inextinguishable laughter shook the skies." At last despair has succeeded to all that energetic study, and the varnish of Cremona is sullenly given up as a lost art.' The position of matters is just the same to-day. It is no use making guesses about the old varnish. Some maintain that it was an oil varnish, others maintain that it was a spirit varnish. The only thing we know is that, whatever it was, it affected the quality of the tone in a remarkable degree. Of course, there are cranks who contend that varnish has nothing to do with tone. They will ask you, If the varnish

on a Cremona violin makes the tone so very much superior, what becomes of the tone when the varnish is gone? There was a Strad. in the collection of Gillott, the pen-maker, which had lost all its original varnish without suffering in any way. But the wood had absorbed all the varnish that was necessary a hundred years before Gillott set eyes on it, and the absence of surface varnish in this case, or in the case of any other old Italian violin, proves nothing whatever. The varnish is certainly an important factor; and, moreover, it makes a very great difference whether it is dried slowly in the sun, as it most likely was at Cremona, or in the oven—whether it is coated by time or by trickery. And in the end, when all is said and done, we come back to what Charles Reade said more than twenty years ago: the masterpieces of Cremona eclipse every new violin in sweetness, oiliness, crispness, and volume of tone as distinct from loudness. Age has dried their vegetable juices, making the carcass much lighter than that of a new violin, and those light, dry frames vibrate at a touch.

But it is time to say something about the 'old masters' themselves—about the men whose violins are to-day the richest possessions of their kind in existence. Who were they? Well, they consist of an unbroken band of four separate families, who all worked in the same neighbourhood, and who, if tradition can be trusted, all learned their trade directly from each other. Their names cover a period of some two hundred years, beginning with Gasparo da Salo, who started violin-making about the year 1560, and ending with Guarnerius del Jesu, who is believed to have died about 1745. Before Gasparo da Salo's time there was nothing definite about the form of the violin. It was he who practically gave the instrument its present form, and the fact that there are only about six violins of this maker known to exist is a proof that in his day the instrument was only just coming into use, and was not much in demand. The long distance of time will not alone account for the scarcity, for there are many of Gasparo's violas extant—instruments, too, which are in some respects superior to others of their class that have since been made. One of these violas is worthy of special notice. It was shown at the Loan Exhibition of Musical Instruments at South Kensington in 1872, and it was sold last year for 81*l*. The varnish is of a very pleasing golden yellow. Gasparo's violins are large-sized and deep, and have a full, rich tone. Ole Bull, the great Norwegian violinist,

had a very fine specimen, which he used latterly at all his concerts in preference to first-class instruments by Amati, Stradivarius, and Guarnerius, which he possessed but considered deficient in tone-colour. In this connection, however, it should be remembered that Bull was a powerful man, above six feet high, and used a bow heavier and longer than those of ordinary players; which means that he required a rich and full-toned violin. Where his instrument is now no one seems to know. After his death it appears to have gone to America. Another violin by Gasparo da Salo was the favourite instrument of Niel Gow, the king of Scottish fiddlers, who used to say that a man was a great violinist only if he could 'gar himsel' greet' when he played. As a rule, however, Gasparo's instruments are not much sought after by connoisseurs, although a well-preserved specimen would certainly bring a long price in the open market.

The second family of the old masters were the Amatis, father, son, and grandson, who were all successful makers, the latter especially so. The Amatis turned out instruments of great beauty, some, indeed, being of indescribable grace and finish; but the tone is rather soft—small and without 'body,' as the violinist would put it—and for this reason their violins do not command the highest figures. A Nicola Amati may be had from 20*l.* to 300*l.*, according to size, pattern, preservation, pedigree, &c. A good Andreas Amati, more suitable for chamber than for ordinary concert use, can be got for 50*l.* Andreas, who died about 1577, was the founder of the Amati family. Very few authentic instruments of his make are extant, and those that do exist are not in a high state of preservation. Nicolas, the grandson, was the most eminent of the name, and he is, besides, deserving of special honour as having been the master of Stradivarius. Although he worked as a rule on the small pattern adopted by the rest of the Amatis, he made some very fine large violins—the so-called 'grand Amatis'—which are almost worshipped in these days, and which hold the field in the matter of prices. Even during his lifetime his instruments were in high repute. Charles IX. of France gave him an order for twelve violins, six violas and six 'cellos, for his private band. Before the French Revolution (1789) most of these instruments could be seen in the Chapel Royal, but after the days of the 5th and 6th of October, 1790, they all mysteriously disappeared, and their subsequent history is uncertain. One of them, a 'cello, was sold in the early years of the

century to Sir William Curtis; it was put up at five hundred guineas, and bought in at two hundred and eighty. In 1872 the instrument belonged to the Rev. A. H. Bridges, who showed it in the Loan Exhibition of that year.

In Stradivarius and Guarnerius del Jesu we reach the zenith of perfection in violin-making. The Guarnerius family, like the Amatis, consisted of several distinct makers whose work is often confused. They all form an important branch of the Cremona school; but when violinists speak of a Guarnerius they mean an instrument by the last of the race, to wit, the Joseph Guarnerius who was born in 1687, and who is designated 'del Jesu' from the curious habit he had of putting a cross and the letters I.H.S. on his labels. Guarnerius del Jesu stands next to Stradivarius himself as the greatest violin-maker the world has ever seen; and it is with him that the art may be said to have died. Stradivarius lived before his day, for he was born in 1644, but there is good reason for supposing that Guarnerius was working for some years after Stradivarius, a veteran of over ninety, had made his last violin.

To write about Stradivarius with the enthusiasm felt by the lover of old violins is not easy. His tone is so inimitable that it must send the veriest gut-scraper into raptures; you cannot hear it in the instruments of any other maker. The perfect workmanship, the kind and quality of the varnish, the choice of the wood, the degree of thickness of back and front, the height of the sides and arching, the exact relation of every part of the instrument, all combine in works of genius which to this day remain unequalled, and will probably remain unequalled to the end of time. Stradivarius knew nothing of the storm and stress of life. He took things easy and made everything with his own hands. He gave endless labour to the details of his instruments, and finished everything beautifully. The insides of his violins are as perfect as the outsides—all the tiny blocks, ribs, and slips of wood for strengthening the sides are without roughness, and the weight of each is as carefully adjusted as if he had been going to receive its equivalent in gold. His imitators have gone to work with a microscope, and have fancied that by copying his measurements and other details they could turn out exactly similar instruments, but they did not sound the same; the proportions were there, but the subtle genius of the workman was absent. And Stradivarius remains—STRADIVARIUS, the man whose very name sends a

thrill of delight through the breast of all who 'take up the fiddle and the bow'—the man who two hundred years ago put together those little bits of wood which to-day are competed for with a daring recklessness of expenditure which puts every other branch of collecting into the shade. Everybody wants a Strad., and when everybody gets one he wants the world to know. And the world delights in the knowledge; for it is not like Joseph Hatton, the song writer, who was so incensed because a violinist advertised that he would play on a five-hundred-guinea instrument, that he intimated his own intention to sing 'Old King Cole' in a pair of Moses's ten-and-six trousers!

It must not be supposed, however, that Stradivarius has always been the rage. Even in violin collecting there are fashions and fads. At first, when Italian instruments began to be sought for—i.e. about the beginning of the present century—every player wanted an Amati. An Amati could then be bought for about 30*l.*, for there was a good supply in existence; but of course as the demand increased so did the prices. Then there was a craze for instruments by Stainer, the founder of the German school of violin-making, and genuine Stainers, which are now of the utmost rarity, went up far beyond their intrinsic value. Again, De Beriot, the Belgian violinist, began to play on a Maggini, and Maggini were soon leading the way in popularity and price. Before this date a Maggini might have been bought for 10*l.*; now the price went up to 100*l.* De Beriot's own instrument, it is said, was sold for 600*l.*, a sum ridiculously in excess of the value of any Maggini ever made. Genuine Maggini are not very common now. They have really many excellent qualities, but the tone is grave and even melancholy. It was Paganini who discovered Guarnerius to the violin world. He got hold of an instrument by that maker, and although Paganini—whose playing was more trick than tone—would have done almost equally well with any make of violin, the enthusiasts credited the instrument with half of the player's power, and Guarnerius violins at once became the fashion. Meanwhile Stradivarius was working up a steady and an assured popularity which, as we shall see presently, has been fully maintained, and is likely to grow with the years. His prices are quite the highest; and whereas he received only about 4*l.* for his violins when finished, a specimen of his make has recently changed hands at the phenomenal figure of 2,000*l.* Let us deal with this instrument, and afterwards with

some of the higher-priced Cremonas in the possession of our professionals and collectors.

A pretty romantic story is this of the 2,000*l.* fiddle! Violin-makers now and again come upon pieces of wood of phenomenal resonance and beauty, and when they do, we may be sure they give special care to the making and finishing of the instrument formed of that wood. Stradivarius at any rate did. In 1716 he had a piece of luck in this particular, and his luck went into an instrument with which he fell so much in love that he absolutely refused to sell it or to allow it to be played upon by any hands but his own. He kept it locked up, and when he died at the advanced age of 93, he bequeathed it to his sons. By-and-by an enthusiastic collector named Salabue got on the scent of the instrument, and about the year 1760 he acquired it—at what figure is not known—from one of the great man's sons. Salabue cherished it until his death about 1827, and then a strange character appears on the scene as purchaser. This was an eccentric old fellow named Luigi Tarisio, who, abandoning his trade as a carpenter, had started collecting old violins, and was now searching in every nook and corner of Italy for the treasures of Cremona. He could neither read nor write, this enthusiastic collector, but he could tell a valuable fiddle the moment he saw it, and he estimated the worth of the Salabue Strad. so well that after he had acquired it he kept it to himself with all the loving care that its maker had already shown for it. Tarisio lived entirely alone in a wretched garret in Milan; and one day in the year 1854 his neighbours found him lying dead among a confused heap of Cremonas. The old man had amassed a collection of some 250 instruments, the result of a thirty years' 'hunt;' and although he had started life a penniless carpenter, he died worth about 12,000*l.*

Well, there was in Paris at this time a certain high priest of fiddle-making named Vuillaume, already mentioned. He knew something about Tarisio and his wonderful collection, and when he heard of the veteran's death he at once set off for Milan to see about purchasing the instruments. And he did purchase them—the whole 250, including, of course, the Salabue Strad.—for the purely nominal sum of 3,166*l.*! What he did with the 249 does not concern us at present; the thing to be noted is that he, too, like all its previous owners, refused to part with the 'Salabue' at any price. He kept it till his death in 1875, and so anxious was he for its safety that during the Franco-German war he had it

buried, case and all, in a damp-proof, air-tight box, and did not unearth it until peace had been proclaimed! From Vuillaume the treasure descended to M. Alard, the great French violinist, who paid 1,000*l.* for it—only to look at it, as it appears, for he was so charmed with the varnish that he seldom used the instrument lest he should spoil the gloss. Alard died in 1888, and two years later the instrument was sold by his heirs—Messrs. Hill acting as agents in the matter—to its present owner, Mr. R. Crawford, of Trinity, Edinburgh, for 2,000*l.* The high figure perfectly astonished the violin world. As recently as 1872 Charles Reade had valued the instrument at 600*l.*—and, by the way, thought so much of its varnish that he declared the violin would be worth just 35*l.* without it!

But there is good reason for the high figure. The instrument is the only one from the hands of Stradivarius that has come down in a condition of perfect preservation. Its glowing ruddy varnish is as fresh as if it had been only put on a week ago, and it unites in itself all the higher qualities which a violin should possess—strength, sweetness, roundness, delicacy, and a distinguished and incisive tone. When Joachim tried it he at once declared that in beauty of tone it surpassed all the other violins he had ever heard. Nor is it a matter of tone only. The form of the instrument is incomparable; all the curves and outlines are drawn with indescribable skill and grace; and there is a perfection of workmanship in every detail which is simply matchless. Messrs. Hill write regarding the instrument: ‘It is the fiddle of Europe, of fabulous newness of appearance and state of preservation. It is a famous possession, and absolutely unique, which can be truthfully applied to but few works of art. The names of its possessors will certainly be handed down to posterity. We feel proud to have been entrusted with the negotiations for its purchase, and consider it the greatest honour we have yet had conferred on us. We believe it is but a question of a few years, and it will fetch a considerably higher price.’ Mr. Crawford has a second Strad., and also a very fine Guarnerius, and he has a picture gallery containing paintings worth about 100,000*l.*, including two by Meissonier. Others may equal him in all these, but they can never equal his 2,000*l.* fiddle, and he has every right to feel proud of the circumstance.

And now let us see about some more ordinary yet remarkable instruments. Dr. Joachim, who is as well known in England as in

his native Germany, is the happy possessor of four Strads. In this respect he is probably unique, for the man who hoards up a collection of violins for the mere selfish pleasure of possessing them has almost disappeared, tempted no doubt by the recent phenomenal rise in prices. There used to be some seven or eight very fine collections of old Italian instruments, but these have long since been dispersed, and the rare fiddles are now, for the most part, in the hands of professional artists who, instead of boxing them up in glass cases in private houses, give the benefit of their superior tone to the musical public at large. Such an artist is Joseph Joachim. One of his best instruments was presented to him by public subscription in celebration of his artistic jubilee, and cost 1,200*l*. Herr Waldemar Meyer's Strad. was also purchased for him by a number of English friends, the price paid being, I believe, 1,250*l*. M. Tivadar Nachez is another Strad. owner, his instrument having cost him 1,000*l*.

The beauty and sweetness of Sarasate's tone are often commented on by people who never think of the tone being in any way due to the fineness of his instrument. As a matter of fact, Sarasate has two Strads. One is the renowned 'Boissier' Strad., which he managed to secure in Paris for 1,000*l*., an hour or two before Hill of London sent an offer for it; the other is one that had been used by Paganini, which came to him through his son Achille. Of course, the latter instrument has an additional value from the circumstance of its former ownership. Paganini had several valuable violins, and the instrument which he used in his later years—a Guarnerius, dated 1743—would probably command something like 5,000*l*. if it could be put in the market now; indeed, the sum of 2,400*l*. has already been offered for it and refused, and a report was lately circulated that 10,000*l*. had been tried. But the instrument cannot be sold. Paganini himself bequeathed it to the city of Genoa, and the municipal authorities there are keenly alive to the value of the treasure. They have it bestowed in a glass case in the recess of a wall, which is again encased in heavy French plate-glass, the whole being closed by a massive door. Every two months the seals are broken, and the violin is played upon for about half an hour in the presence of city officials, and then it is replaced and put under municipal seal. This, of course, is done to keep the instrument in good condition. Paganini came by the violin in a curious way. A French merchant lent him the instrument to play upon at a concert at Leghorn. After the concert, Paganini

brought it back to its owner, when the latter exclaimed, to the delighted astonishment of the player, 'Never more will I profane the strings which your fingers have touched; that instrument is yours.' The Genoa people have been in luck in the matter of violins. Sivori, who died last year, was a pupil of Paganini, and Paganini presented him when a youth with a very fine Guarnerius instrument. It was, therefore, but natural that Sivori should wish his violin to rest beside Paganini's, and so to-day for a small fee you can see both instruments in the municipal niche at Genoa.

Lady Hallé said not so long ago to an interviewer that violins can be turned out by the 'modern master maker' quite as good as those of the old Cremona school. There may be some reservation in the 'can be;' but at any rate Lady Hallé herself has never given much practical encouragement to the modern master maker. She plays on a Strad. dated 1709, which the dealers would probably value at something like 1,000*l.*, since it, too, has a pedigree. The instrument belonged formerly to Ernst, the celebrated virtuoso, whose widow parted with it for a sum a little under 500*l.* Ernst had it from one of our earliest English collectors, Mr. Andrew Fountain, of Narford, Norfolk; and when it came to Lady Hallé it was in the hands of Mr. David Laurie, of Glasgow. She got it in rather a lucky way. She was just negotiating with Mr. Laurie about its purchase, and had the instrument on trial, when one evening the Duke of Edinburgh—who, by the way, has himself a valuable Strad., as well as two instruments by Guarnerius—heard her play on it at a private house. The Duke was so charmed with the instrument, that on learning it was for sale he declared to Lady Hallé that if she did not complete the purchase he would buy the violin himself. Lady Hallé good-humouredly protested against this determination; and in the end his Royal Highness combined with the late Earl of Dudley and the late Lord Hardwick in purchasing and presenting the instrument to the eminent violinist. Sir Charles Hallé, from whom I have these particulars, remarks that the instrument is still in a state of 'perfect preservation.'

There are, of course, many other Strads. with a history, the which if one were to tell it would fill a volume and more. There is, for example, the 'Tuscan' Strad., made by the master in 1690. In 1794 this instrument was sold to an Irish amateur for 25*l.* This gentleman's grandson sold it in 1876 for 240*l.* to Mr. Ricardo, who in turn sold it to Messrs. Hill in 1888 for 1,000*l.* From this

firm it passed to its present owner, who is said to have refused 2,000*l.* for it. Thus have the prices risen. Then there is the 'Betts' Strad., whose record price was broken only by Mr. Crawford's treasure. Betts was a music-seller in London some sixty years ago, and he actually bought this instrument over the counter from a stranger for a guinea! He soon found out its value, and nothing would induce him to part with it, though he was more than once offered 500*l.* for it. Ultimately, some years after the death of Betts, Mr. George Hart purchased it for 800 guineas. It was now that Charles Reade went into raptures about the instrument. 'Eight hundred guineas,' he said, 'seems a long price for a dealer to give, but, after all, here is a violin, a picture, and a miracle all in one; and big diamonds increase in number, but these spoils of time are limited for ever now.' Mr. Hart sold the instrument in 1886, and quite recently it again changed hands at not much less than 2,000*l.* From a guinea to 2,000*l.* in sixty years! There is a romance of reality about *that*. The 'Gillott' Strad., now in the possession of a Leeds collector, is so named because it was once the property of the eminent pen-maker. Sixty years ago it was in Mr. Fountain's collection. It is now valued by experts at 1,000*l.*, and yet, when it was sold at Christie's in 1872, after Gillott's death, it brought only 290*l.* 'amid great excitement.' The low price might, however, be accounted for in this case by the fact of so many instruments as Gillott possessed being thrown on the market at the same time. Still, it is a curious circumstance that the highest prices are never secured in the sale room. At Puttick & Simpson's in 1893 a remarkable violin, known as the 'Ames' Strad., in a state of almost perfect preservation, produced only 860*l.*, and this was an auction-room record. Again, the highest sale-room figure for a Guarnerius was the 600 guineas paid for the instrument sold in 1876, and now used by M. Ysaye, the great Belgian violinist.

Of Strad. 'cellos there are only a few in existence, and, quite apart from price, they are practically unobtainable. Mr. Forster tells on very good authority that Stradivarius once sent over some instruments to England on sale, and that they were taken back because the merchant was unable to get as much as 5*l.* for a 'cello. One is at first inclined to rate the amateurs of those days for their stupidity until he remembers that time had then done nothing for the perfection of these instruments. Nowadays, at any rate, there is no difficulty. Mr. Franchomme sold his 'cello for

1,600*l.*; and the 'Batta' 'cello was bought by Hill in 1893 for the perfectly fabulous figure of 3,200*l.*! This latter instrument belonged to M. Alexandre Batta, of Paris, and both he and his 'cello were as household words in the musical world of Paris for the last fifty years. He bought the instrument from a French dealer in 1836 for 7,500 francs, a sum which was then considered highly extravagant. Twenty years ago a collector offered him 50,000 francs for it, and later on a French duke tempted him with just twice that amount. Now, being a man of eighty, he has parted with his treasure—not without a pang, as those who saw him kiss the instrument reverently in the train before Mr. Hill started for England with it could best realise.

Signor Piatti has a magnificent Strad. 'cello, of date 1720. It is known as the 'red 'cello' because of the very rich red tint of its varnish. This, too, is an instrument with a history—a history which the Signor has courteously sent from the shores of the Lake of Como. The instrument was first brought to England by a Spanish wine merchant, who placed it for sale with a Regent Street dealer, asking 150*l.* for it. For a long time it failed to find a purchaser even at that low figure. When Piatti first saw it, it was in the hands of a professional musician, named Pigott, in Dublin. The eminent virtuoso at once recognised in it a magnificent instrument, and accordingly he 'kept his eye on it.' When Pigott died he was unfortunately unable to purchase it, but he brought it to the notice of a dealer, who secured it for 300*l.* It was shortly afterwards sold to General Oliver for 350*l.*, and the general, being a friend of Piatti, ultimately presented the 'cello to him with the remark, 'I always intended it for you.' When Vuillaume saw it some years afterwards he offered 800*l.* for it; and the experts now believe that if put into the market to-day it would bring near 2,000*l.* Signor Piatti, it may readily be understood, takes precious care of his possession. He never runs the risk of carrying it out of London, and has it most carefully bestowed during his absence. This is probably out of sheer affection for the instrument, for nowadays the owner of a Strad. need not be greatly afraid of the thief. Such an instrument has a personality which nothing short of entire demolition can disguise or destroy; and there is undoubtedly something in the remark of a writer that this personality has been a powerful agent in the cause of morality!

But now a few words in closing about one or two of the Guarnerius instruments. Some of the violins of Guarnerius are

certainly equal to some of the Strads., but the tone—according to the popular notion, at any rate—is not so easily produced, and, as a rule, our public players prefer Stradivarius when they can get him, his tone being more yielding and requiring less force and pressure to bring it out. Still, there *are* players who prefer Stradivarius's great rival to Stradivarius himself. There is Mr. Maurice Sons, for example. The Guarnerius violin now in possession of this artist is probably one of the finest instruments of the master in existence. It first became famous through having belonged to Vieuxtemps, who, in a letter to Mr. Hart—from whom he bought it—speaks of it as being 'one of the finest of the purest specimens of the master,' and adds that he is 'proud actually to possess it, to look at it, and to admire it.' In reply to an inquiry for some details regarding the instrument, Mr. Sons sends me the following interesting letter: 'The violin is in wonderful preservation, without a single crack; even the linings and corner blocks are original, as well as the label, which is dated 1741. The varnish, which is very thickly put on, is of a magnificent brownish-red, with the golden lustre peculiar to fine old Italian violins, only a small part of the back at the lower end being bare. Its build is flat, with very broad sides, the wood being extremely thick. It would be exceedingly difficult to find an instrument with a bigger, and at the same time, finer quality of tone; and without being prejudiced, I may say that I prefer my violin to most of the many fine ones, including those of Stradivarius, I have seen and played. The workmanship is not refined. I may even call it careless, but there is a rugged grandeur about the violin which is imposing and defies imitation.' Referring to the circumstance already noted, that most of our eminent soloists seem to fight shy of instruments by Guarnerius, Mr. Sons says: 'The reason why so few artists are playing Guarnerius violins lies chiefly in the fact that there are very few specimens of this master compared with the immense number made by Stradivarius, but partly also because the Strad. is the fashionable instrument. The latter has certainly something very brilliant and noble; but the *fine* violins made by Guarnerius are quite as noble, and have far more richness and depth of tone besides, and are quite as capable of bringing out every shade of expression. My violin must have been very difficult to play when new, on account of the immense thickness of the wood; but Guarnerius was such a consummate master that he knew quite well that in the course of time this instrument would

respond very easily. It does so now in effect, and it is certainly the contrary from being heavy or dry in tone.' On the death of *Vieuxtemps* this violin was sold to the Duc de Campo Selice, who had been a pupil of the virtuoso, and who had one of the finest collections of violins then in existence. It was out of this collection that Mr. Sons acquired the instrument, but he designedly omits to say how much he paid for it.

Mr. J. T. Carrodus is another of our eminent soloists who believe in the virtues of *Guarnerius*, for he has two instruments of that maker in addition to one by *Stradivarius*. Mr. Carrodus always used the latter until he purchased the 'Cannon' *Guarnerius*, so called on account of the grandeur of its tone. This latter instrument has a history. Once the property of a Polish nobleman, it was given by him to *Paganini*, who gambled it away in one of his eccentric escapades. 'The price of the instrument,' says Mr. Carrodus in a letter, 'was 700*l.* twelve years ago when I bought it, and I should not like to take 1,000*l.* for it now.' The varnish, a lovely red colour, is in remarkably good preservation, and the instrument is altogether in splendid condition. Mr. Carrodus's second *Guarnerius* he came across by accident about two years ago at Messrs. Hill's. 'The varnish,' he writes, 'is amber, not so rich and artistic as the red of the "Cannon," but as to tone I find very little to choose between the two instruments.' This second *Guarnerius* originally belonged to W. Cramer, and latterly it was the property of Alexander Mackenzie, the father of the present Principal of the Royal Academy of Music. Mr. Carrodus's *Strad.* is now used as a solo instrument by his son Bernhard.

The prices of the *Guarnerius* instruments are steadily rising, and, having regard to the caprices of fashion, it is within the measure of probability that they will yet reach the highest of the *Strad.* figures. In the '*Times*' quite recently 1,400*l.* was asked for a violin of this make; and another instrument from the same hands was sold by Mr. Hart to Signor Nicolini, the husband of Madame Patti, for 1,500*l.* This looks at least promising.

AT THE WATERLOO BANQUET.¹

HE was a factor, or estate agent, for one of the oldest of the old Scotch families. Four generations had occupied the lands in his time, and each succeeding nobleman had honoured him with confidence and friendship. A staunch, trusty man was he, and of the good old-fashioned type. He had many strange experiences. Here is his account of one of them.

‘When in London on one occasion I met a man in the street whom I remembered as having been at one time valet, afterwards steward, to a Scottish nobleman. He was a man with a decided personality, by no means bashful, Sharp by name and sharp by nature. Recognising me at once, he saluted in his usual faultless style, and I stopped to exchange a few pleasantries. Before we separated he remarked :

“Now, sir, what can I do for you in London? I shall ever remember your kindness in procuring good situations for my sons, and shall be glad to be of any service to you. Give me the opportunity now.”

‘I said I was obliged to him, but really every sight in London seemed to have a money value—that I had no difficulty.

“Oh, but, sir, I probably could get you a sight that money could not buy. Now try me.”

“Well, then, Sharp, could you take me to the Waterloo Banquet to-morrow?”

‘It was, to my mind, the occasion of interest above all others.

“Impossible, absolutely impossible,” he said at once. “Why, you can’t know what you are asking, sir. Not a living soul except the officers who fought in the battle can get to the banquet. The rule is positively sacred. The King is the one exception, and he has to consider himself a privileged guest.”

“Oh, well,” I said, in mock resentment, “you insisted on my naming some sight which money could not buy, and the very first I mention beats you. Good-day, Sharp.”

‘I was turning away, when the ready-witted fellow sprang after me, and with a show of spirit said :

“Well, sir, you have put me to the test. I will undertake to

¹ The experience here related is genuine.

show you the Waterloo Banquet to-morrow night. On this occasion, however, you must obey *my* instructions. You must come, in evening dress, to the opposite side of Piccadilly from Apsley House, at five o'clock punctually. Keep your eye on the window directly opposite to the side or east gate. You will see me appear there exactly at the hour. If I hold both arms above my head and beckon to you with my hands, you may consider that all is right. If you see me keep my arms down and shake my head, all is wrong; you may go home. If all is right, prepare to walk leisurely across the street towards the gate, which you will find guarded by policemen as well as by soldiers. Time yourself to arrive at the gate just as I do, for I will be visible. And then, sir, leave the rest to me."

"We parted for the day, and I made several calls in the afternoon, one of them, strangely enough, on Sharp's former master, who urged me to come and dine with him the following evening, holding out as an inducement that he would get several mutual acquaintances with whom we should be sure to have a night of fun and story-telling of days gone by. I declined again and again, saying I was already engaged.

"Come, come," said his lordship, "put your engagement off; remember I promise you will meet those worthies. Do."

"Well, my lord," I replied, "I may live to meet them again, but I shall never have another chance of my to-morrow night's engagement."

"Come, come" (a common expression of his lordship's, who was as good a man as ever flavoured a glass of old port). "What is this great engagement you are so bound to?"

"Well, my lord, I am going to the Waterloo Banquet to-morrow night."

"You should have seen him whistle and laugh as he exclaimed :

"Why, man, you can't possibly be so privileged; even I could not go."

"Oh, I am quite aware of that, my lord, but I am going."

"Come, come, how is this to be accomplished?" he asked.

"Well, do you remember Sharp, whom you had first as valet, then as steward, years ago? He has promised to let me see this sight of all sights."

His lordship reflected a short time, and then remarked :

"Well, sir, if that man Sharp has undertaken to let you be present at the Waterloo Banquet, he will fulfil his promise. At a

levee on one occasion he was in attendance on my two sisters and myself. The crush was unusually great, and one of my sisters grew faint, the other very nervous. I turned to Sharp for help, and he, rising to the occasion at once, offered his arm to one of my sisters. She took it, and Sharp, asking us to follow him, managed to make his way through the press to a side door, which he opened. We found ourselves in a charming room, with luncheon on the table. Sharp locked the door, and, offering my sisters chairs, we enjoyed an excellent repast and some good wine. Fortified in this way we were able to stand out the fatigues of the levee. Yes, Sharp is a wonderfully clever fellow."

Next day, I was at my trysting-place in plenty of time, but far from happy at the rôle I expected to play. I dreaded being found out and disgraced.

' Prompt to time, Sharp appeared at the window. His hands were high above his head, his face beaming with delight. How he happened to be in Apsley House I never found out. He was a strange fellow. I slowly walked across the street, picking my steps with unnecessary care, trying to anticipate the challenge of the sentries by finding some plea for entrance. All at once I became aware of some one shouting my name, and calling me a great, lumbering, dilatory fellow, who was always late. I looked up in amazement, but Sharp, for Sharp it was, only shouted the louder, "Come away, confound you, come away at once; you're keeping back all the preparations." He seemed so very angry, that the sentries and policemen were completely taken in, as in fact I was myself in more senses than one.

' Once indoors, Sharp assured me all was right, but, for my part, I was wishing myself anywhere but in Apsley House. In a side-room where I took off my overcoat, I was introduced to the Duke of Wellington's house steward, and—oh, mercy me!—to the Chief Inspector of Police in charge of the force on duty. This gave me such a start that I implored Sharp to let me put on my coat and go. But the fellow was as cool as ever I saw him, and only said, "Nonsense, sir." So here was I, a justice of the peace and deputy lieutenant, to be exposed in Apsley House as an impostor. Sharp had vanished, and I had to keep up a conversation with the Chief Inspector. I was in a desperate fright. What I talked about I have not the smallest recollection.

' Then back came Sharp, as respectful now as ever. "Come this way, if you please, sir." I had to follow. He led me into the

grand hall, and placed me at the foot of the staircase, on one side, telling me I was not to move six inches till he came for me again.

‘I obeyed.

‘After gathering my wits and looking round, I saw, opposite me, a “boardly” man, like myself in every way, even to the clothes. He also was motionless, and never a word we spoke. Now we had not stood very long, when the Duke of Wellington himself came down the stair and stood stock still between us on the centre of the lowest step.

‘It was the hour of arrival, and, standing there, he received all the old heroes in a true military fashion. All seemed punctual to the minute. What a sight it was! Veterans with legs awanting, arms awanting, lots not winged at all. None without medals and orders purchased by daring bravery. I felt my blood rise. To look at such heroes was a glorious joy. The scene was worth ten years of my life.

‘A few minutes after the company had arrived, there was an extra stir at the door. The group divided and straightened up, and, sir, before I had realised what had happened, in came the King.

‘He walked through his old warriors, and well he might look proud of them. The Duke stepped forward, bowed, and shook hands. Then up the stairs the two went, the Duke one step behind his Sovereign. The officers followed, and all was quiet. I was thinking how privileged I had been, when, from behind, came friend Sharp’s voice, “Well, sir, how have you got on?”

‘“Oh, first-rate,” I said. “It was magnificent. Now let me go.”

‘“Not at all; the best is yet to come.”

‘He took me into the picture gallery, next the banqueting hall, where we found the Chief Inspector again, and several other gentlemanly-looking individuals. We examined the pictures and fine old furniture, Sharp going in and out, as if he had the entire responsibility of the house.

‘Coming up to me one time, he told me to stand steadily while he put something in my tail pocket. When he had done so, he explained in a side whisper, “I have plucked a feather out of the King’s hat, and one out of the Duke’s. Keep them as mementoes of this day.”

‘Just fancy my feelings as I looked at the Chief Inspector, and thought what a fine job he could make of me. Shortly after this,

Sharp desired me to be in readiness to draw back one half of a large sliding door, so as to throw the gallery into the banquetting hall. My *vis-à-vis* of the staircase appeared on the scene again, and took his stand by the other half. We acted to orders, and there, full before my eyes, as the doors slid back, was the brilliant assembly, The Waterloo Banquet. The table glittered with its plate and crystal; there was the great circle of gallant hearts, the King, the Duke. The remembrance is still fresh as ever; the gay uniforms, the bright light, the silvery clink of the glasses, the perfume of the flowers.

‘I stood in a recess of the gallery and feasted my eyes.

‘As I watched, the old Duke rose, glass in hand, his steady eye upon the company. A silence fell for a moment, and, raising his glass, he said, in a voice charged with respect, pride, and dignity, “The King’s health.” Then, turning with a bow, “Sire, your health.” It was done with noble simplicity. The company rose as one man. I tell you, sir, if I had shouted till the roof rang, and been shot for it, I wouldn’t have cared. Talk of patriotism? My old spirit was a fury.’ (In fact the old gentleman seemed to have reached a climax, for words failed here.)

‘When the company broke up, I was taken by the Duke’s steward to a snug room, where I again found my friend the Chief Inspector—who had now no terrors for me—and some others. Here we enjoyed a most excellent supper.

‘At last Sharp brought my overcoat and helped me into it, remarking as he did so, “Be careful, sir; in one pocket I have put the glass used by the King, in the other the one used by the Duke; they are wrapped in paper. And be careful also, sir, of the feathers.”’

THE SOWERS.

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,

AUTHOR OF 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SUSPECTED HOUSE.

THE Countess Lanovitch and Catrina were sitting together in the too luxurious drawing-room that overlooked the English Quay and the Neva. The double windows were rigorously closed, while the inner panes were covered with a thick rime. The sun was just setting over the marshes that border the upper waters of the Gulf of Finland, and lit up the snow-clad city with a rosy glow which penetrated to the room where the two women sat.

Catrina was restless, moving from chair to chair, from fireplace to window, with a lack of repose which would certainly have touched the nerves of a less lethargic person than the Countess.

'My dear child!' that lady was exclaiming with lackadaisical horror, 'we cannot go to Thors yet. The thought is too horrible. You never think of my health. Besides, the gloom of the everlasting snow is too painful. It makes me think of your poor mistaken father, who is probably shovelling it in Siberia. Here, at all events, one can avoid the window—one need not look at it.'

'The policy of shutting one's eyes is a mistake,' said Catrina.

She had risen, and was standing by the window, her stunted form being framed, as it were, in a rosy glow of pink.

The Countess heaved a little sigh and gazed idly at the fire. She did not understand Catrina. She was afraid of her. There was something rugged and dogged which the girl had inherited from her father—that Slavonic love of pain for its own sake—which makes Russian patriots and thinkers strange, incomprehensible beings.

'I question it, Catrina,' said the elder lady; 'but perhaps it is a matter of health. Dr. Stantovitch told me, quite between ourselves, that if I had given way to my grief at the time of the trial he would not have held himself responsible for the consequences.'

'Dr. Stantovitch,' said Catrina, 'is a humbug.'

'My dear child!' exclaimed the Countess, 'he attends all the noble ladies of Petersburg.'

'Precisely,' answered Catrina.

She was woman enough to enter into futile arguments with her mother, and man enough to despise herself for doing it.

'Why do you want to go back to Thors so soon?' murmured the elder lady, with a little sigh of despair. She knew she was playing a losing game very badly. She was mentally shuddering at the recollection of former sleigh-journeying from Tver to Thors.

'Because I am sure father would like us to be there this hard winter.'

'But your father is in Siberia,' put in the Countess, which remark was ignored.

'Because if we do not go before the snow begins to melt we shall have to do the journey in carriages over bad roads, which is sure to knock you up. Because our place is at Thors, and no one wants us here. I hate Petersburg. It is no use living here unless one is rich and beautiful and popular. We are none of those things, so we are better at Thors.'

'But we have many nice friends here, dear. You will see, this afternoon. I expect quite a reception. By the way, I hope Kupfer has sent the little cakes. Your father used to be so fond of them. I wonder if we could send him a box to Siberia. He would enjoy them, poor man! He might give some to the prison people, and thus obtain a little alleviation. Yes; the Comte de Chauxville said he would come on my first reception-day, and, of course, Paul and his wife must return my call. They will come to-day. I am anxious to see her. They say she is beautiful and dresses well.'

Catrina's broad white teeth gleamed for a moment in the flickering firelight, as she clenched them over her lower lip.

'And therefore Paul's happiness in life is assured,' she said, in a hard voice.

'Of course. What more could he want?' murmured the Countess, in blissful ignorance of any irony.

Catrina looked at her mother with a gleam of utter contempt in her eyes. That is one of the privileges of a great love, whether it bring happiness or misery—the contempt for all who have never known it.

While they remained thus the sound of sleigh-bells on the

quiet English Quay made itself heard through the double windows. There was a clang of many tones, and the horses pulled up with a jerk. The colour left Catrina's face quite suddenly, as if wiped away, leaving her ghastly. She was going to see Paul and his wife.

Presently the door opened, and Etta came into the room with the indomitable assurance which characterised her movements and earned for her a host of feminine enemies.

'Madame la Comtesse,' she said, with her most gracious smile, taking the limp hand offered to her by the Countess Lanovitch.

Catrina stood in the embrasure of the window, hating her.

Paul followed on his wife's heels, scarcely concealing his boredom. He was not a society man. Catrina came forward and exchanged a formal bow with Etta, who took in her plainness and the faults of her dress at one contemptuous glance. She smiled with the perfect pity of a good figure for no figure at all. Paul was shaking hands with the Countess. When he took Catrina's hand her fingers were icy, and twitched nervously within his grasp.

The Countess was already babbling to Etta in French. The Princess Howard-Alexis always began by informing Paul's friends that she knew no Russian. For a moment Paul and Catrina were left, as it were, alone. When the Countess was once fairly roused from her chronic lethargy, her voice usually acquired a metallic ring which dominated any other conversation that might be going on in the room.

'I wish you happiness,' said Catrina, and no one heard her but Paul. She did not raise her eyes to his, but looked vaguely at his collar. Her voice was short and rather breathless, as if she had just emerged from deep water.

'Thank you,' answered Paul simply.

He turned and somewhat naturally looked at his wife. Catrina's thoughts followed his. A man is at a disadvantage in the presence of the woman who loves him. She usually sees, through him—a marked difference between masculine and feminine love. Catrina looked up sharply and caught his eyes resting on Etta.

'He does not love her—he does not love her,' was the thought that instantly leapt into her brain.

And if she had said it to him he would have contradicted her flatly and honestly, and in vain.

'Yes,' the Countess was saying with lazy volubility; 'Paul is

one of our oldest friends. We are neighbours in the country, you know. He has always been in and out of our house like one of the family. My poor husband was very fond of him.'

'Is your husband dead, then?' asked Etta in a low voice, with a strange haste.

'No; he is only in Siberia. You have perhaps heard of his misfortune—Count Stepán Lanovitch.'

Etta nodded her head with the deepest sympathy.

'I feel for you, Countess,' she said. 'And yet you are so brave—and Mademoiselle,' she said, turning to Catrina. 'I hope we shall see more of each other in Tver.'

Catrina bowed jerkily and made no reply. Etta glanced at her sharply. Perhaps she saw more than Catrina knew.

'I suppose,' she said to the Countess, with that inclusive manner which spreads the conversation out, 'that Paul and Mademoiselle de Lanovitch were playmates?'

The reply lay with either of the ladies, but Catrina turned away.

'Yes,' answered the Countess; 'but Catrina is only twenty-four—ten years younger than Paul.'

'Indeed!' with a faint, cutting surprise.

Indeed, Etta looked younger than Catrina. *On a l'âge de son cœur*, and if the heart be worn it transmits its weariness to the face, where such signs are ascribed to years. So the little stab was justified by Catrina's appearance.

While the party assembled were thus exchanging social amenities, a past master in such commerce joined them in the person of Claude de Chauxville.

He smiled his mechanical, heartless smile upon them all, but when he bowed over Etta's hand his face was grave. He expressed no surprise at seeing Paul and Etta, though his manner betokened that emotion. There was no sign of this meeting having been a prearranged matter, brought about by himself through the easy and innocent instrumentality of the Countess.

'And you are going to Tver, no doubt?' he said almost at once to Etta.

'Yes,' answered that lady, with a momentary hunted look in her eyes. It is strange how an obscure geographical name may force its way into our lives, never to be forgotten. Queen Mary of England struck a note of the human octave when she protested that the word 'Calais' was graven on her heart. It seemed to Etta

that 'Tver' was written large wheresoever she turned, for the conscience looks through a glass and sees whatever may be written thereon overspreading every prospect.

'The Prince,' continued De Chauxville, turning to Paul, 'is a great sportsman, I am told—a mighty hunter. I wonder why Englishmen always want to kill something.'

Paul smiled without making an immediate answer. He was not the man to be led into the danger of repartee by such as De Chauxville.

'We have a few bears left,' he said.

'You are fortunate,' protested De Chauxville. 'I shot one when I was younger. I was immensely afraid, and so was the bear. I have a great desire to try again.'

Etta glanced at Paul, who returned De Chauxville's bland gaze with all the imperturbability of a prince.

The Countess's cackling voice broke in at this juncture, as perhaps De Chauxville had intended it to do.

'Then why not come and shoot ours?' she said. 'We have quite a number of them in the forests at Thors.'

'Ah, Madame la Comtesse,' he answered, with outspread, deprecatory hands, 'but that would be taking too great an advantage of your hospitality and your well-known kindness.'

He turned to Catrina, who received him with a half-concealed frown. The Countess bridled and looked at her daughter with obvious maternal meaning, as one who was saying, 'There—you bungled your prince, but I have procured you a baron.'

'The abuse of hospitality is the last refuge of the needy,' continued De Chauxville oracularly. 'But my temptation is strong; shall I yield to it, Mademoiselle?'

Catrina smiled unwillingly.

'I would rather leave it to your own conscience,' she said. 'But I fail to see the danger you anticipate.'

'Then I accept, Madame,' said De Chauxville, with the engaging frankness which ever had a false ring in it.

If the whole affair had been prearranged in Claude de Chauxville's mind, it certainly succeeded more fully than is usually the case with human schemes. If, on the other hand, this invitation was the result of chance, Fortune had favoured Claude de Chauxville beyond his deserts.

The little scene had played itself out before the eyes of Paul, who did not want it; of Etta, who desired it; and of Catrina, who

did not exactly know what she wanted, with the precision of a stage-play carefully rehearsed.

Claude de Chauxville had unscrupulously made use of feminine vanity with all the skill that was his. A little glance towards Etta as he accepted the invitation conveyed to her the fact that she was the object of his clever little plot, that it was in order to be near her that he had forced the Countess Lanovitch to invite him to Thors; and Etta, with all her shrewdness, was promptly hoodwinked. Vanity is a handicap assigned to clever women by Fate, who handicaps us all without appeal. De Chauxville saw by a little flicker of the eyelids that he had not missed his mark. He had hit Etta where his knowledge of her told him she was unusually vulnerable. He had made one ally. The Countess he looked upon with a wise contempt. She was easier game than Etta. Catrina he understood well enough. Her rugged simplicity had betrayed her secret to him before he had been five minutes in the room. Paul he despised as a man lacking *finesse* and *esprit*—a truly French form of contempt. For Frenchmen have yet to learn that such qualities have remarkably little to do with love.

Claude de Chauxville was one of those men—alas! too many—who owe their success in life almost entirely to some feminine influence or another. Whenever he came into direct opposition to men it was his instinct to retire from the field. Behind Paul's back he despised him; before his face he cringed.

'Then perhaps,' he said, when the Princess was engaged in the usual farewells with the Countess, and Paul was moving towards the door—'then perhaps, Prince, we may meet again before the spring—if the Countess intends her invitation to be taken seriously.'

'Yes,' answered Paul; 'I often shoot at Thors.'

'If you do not happen to come over, perhaps I may be allowed to call and pay my respects—or is the distance too great?'

'You can do it in an hour and a half with a quick horse, if the snow is good,' answered Paul.

'Then I may make it *au revoir*?' inquired De Chauxville, holding out a frank hand.

'*Au revoir*,' said Paul, 'if you wish it.'

And he turned to say good-bye to Catrina.

As De Chauxville had arrived later than the other visitors, it was quite natural that he should remain after they had left, and

It may be safely presumed that he took good care to pin the Countess Lanovitch down to her rash invitation.

'Why is that man coming to Tver?' said Paul, rather gruffly, when Etta and he were settled beneath the furs of the sleigh. 'We do not want him there.'

'I expect,' replied Etta rather petulantly, 'that we shall be so horribly dull that even Monsieur de Chauxville will be a welcome alleviation.'

Paul said nothing. He gave a little sign to the driver, and the horses leapt forward with a musical clash of their silver bells.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY.

It is to be feared that there is a lamentable lack of local colour in the present narrative. Having safely arrived at Petersburg, we have nothing to tell of that romantic city—no hints at deep-laid plots, no prison, nor tales of jail-birds—tales with salt on them *bien entendu*—the usual grain. We have hardly mentioned the Newski Prospect, which street by ancient right must needs figure in all Russian romance. We have instead been prating of drawing-rooms and mere interiors of houses, which to-day are the same all the world over. A Japanese fan is but a Japanese fan, whether it hang on the wall of a Canadian drawing-room or the matting of an Indian bungalow. An Afghan carpet is the same on any floor. It is the foot that treads the carpet which makes one to differ from another.

Whether it be in Petersburg or Pekin, it still must be the human being that lends the interest to the still life around it. A truce, therefore, to picturesque description—sour grapes to the present pen—of church and fort and river, with which the living persons of whom we tell have little or nothing to do.

Maggie was alone in the great drawing-room of the house at the end of the English Quay—alone and grave. Some people, be it noted, are gravest when alone, and they are wise, for the world has too much gravity for us to go about it with a long face, making matters worse. Let each of us be the centre of his own gravity. Maggie Delafield had, perhaps, that spark in the brain for which we have but an ugly word. We call it 'pluck.' And

by it we are enabled to win a losing game—and, harder still, to lose a losing game—without much noise or plaint.

Whatever this girl's joys or sorrows may have been—and pray you, madam, remember that no man ever knows his neighbour's heart!—she succeeded as well as any in concealing both. There are some women who tell one just enough about themselves to prove that they can understand and sympathise. Maggie was of these; but she told no more.

She was alone when Paul came into the room. It was a large room, with more than one fireplace. Maggie was reading, and she did not look round. Paul stopped—warming himself by the fire nearest to the door. He was the sort of man to come into a room without any remark.

Maggie looked up for a moment, glancing at the wood-fire. She seemed to know for certain that it was Paul.

'Have you been out?' she asked.

'Yes—calling.'

He came towards her, standing beside her with his hands clasped behind his back, looking into the fire.

'Socially,' he said with a quiet humour, 'I am not a success.'

Her book dropped upon her knees, her two hands crossed upon its pages. She stared at the glowing logs as if his thoughts were written there.

'I do not want to give way,' he went on, 'to a habit of morbid introspection, but socially I am a horrid failure.'

There was a little smile on the girl's face, not caused by his grave humour. It would appear that she was smiling at something beyond that—something only visible to her own mental vision.

'Perhaps you do not try,' she suggested practically.

'Oh yes, I do. I try in several languages. I have no small-talk.'

'You see,' she said gravely, 'you are a large man.'

'Does that make any difference?' he asked simply.

She turned and looked at him as he towered by her side—looked at him with a queer smile.

'Yes,' she answered, 'I think so.'

For some moments they remained thus without speaking—in a peaceful silence. Although the room was very large, it was peaceful. What is it, by the way, that brings peace to the atmosphere of a room, of a whole house sometimes? It can only be

something in the individuality of some person in it. We talk glibly of the comfort of being settled—the peacefulness, the restfulness of it. Some people, it would appear, are always settled—of settled convictions, settled mind, settled purpose. Paul Howard-Alexis was perhaps such a person.

At all events, the girl sitting in the low chair by his side seemed to be under some such influence, seemed to have escaped the unrest which is said to live in palaces.

When she spoke it was with a quiet voice, as of one having plenty of time and leisure.

‘Where have you been?’ she asked practically. Maggie was always practical.

‘To the Lanovitch’s, where we met the Baron de Chauxville.’

‘Ah!’

‘Why—ah?’

‘Because I dislike the Baron de Chauxville,’ answered Maggie in her decisive way.

‘I am glad of that—because I hate him!’ said Paul. ‘Have you any reason for your dislike?’

Miss Delafield had a reason, but it was not one that she could mention to Paul. So she gracefully skirted the question.

‘He has the same effect upon me as snails,’ she explained airily.

Then, as if to salve her conscience, she gave the reason, but disguised, so that he did not recognise it.

‘I have seen more of M. de Chauxville than you have,’ she said gravely. ‘He is one of those men of whom women do see more. When men are present he loses confidence, like a cur when a thoroughbred terrier is about. He dislikes you. I should take care to give M. de Chauxville a wide berth if I were you, Paul.’

He had risen, after glancing at the clock. She turned down the page of her book, and, looking up suddenly, met his eyes, for a moment only.

‘We are not likely to drop into a close friendship,’ said Paul. ‘But—he is coming to Thors—twenty miles from Osterno.’

There was a momentary look of anxiety in the girl’s eyes, which she turned away to hide.

‘I am sorry for that,’ she said. ‘Does Herr Steinmetz know it?’

‘Not yet.’

Maggie paused for a moment. She was tracing with the tip

of her finger a pattern stamped on the binding of the book. It would seem that she had something more to say. Then suddenly she went away without saying it.

In the meantime Claude de Chauxville had gently led the Countess Lanovitch to invite him to stay to dinner. He accepted the invitation with becoming reluctance and returned to the Hôtel de Berlin, where he was staying, in order to dress. He was fully alive to the expediency of striking while the iron is hot—more especially where women are concerned. Moreover, his knowledge of the countess led him to fear that she would soon tire of his society. This lady had a lamentable facility for getting to the bottom of her friends' powers of entertainment within a few days. It was De Chauxville's intention to make secure his invitation to Thors, and then to absent himself from the countess.

At dinner he made himself vastly agreeable, recounting many anecdotes fresh from Paris, which duly amused the Countess Lanovitch, and somewhat shocked Catrina, who was not advanced or inclined to advance.

After dinner the guest asked Mademoiselle Catrina to play. He opened the grand piano in the inner drawing-room with such gallantry and effusion that the sanguine countess, post-prandially somnolescent in her luxurious chair, began rehearsing different modes of mentioning her son-in-law, the baron.

'Yes,' she muttered to herself, 'and Catrina is plain—terribly plain.'

Thereupon she fell asleep.

De Chauxville had a good memory, and was, moreover, a good and capable liar. So Catrina did not find out that he knew nothing whatever of music. He watched the plain face as the music rose and fell, himself impervious to its transcendent tones. With practised cunning he waited until Catrina was almost intoxicated with music—an intoxication to which all great musicians are liable.

'Ah!' he said. 'I envy you your power. With music like that one can almost imagine that life is what one would wish it to be.'

She did not answer, but she wandered off into another air—a slumber-song.

'The Schlummerlied,' said De Chauxville softly. 'It almost has the power to send a sorrow to sleep.'

This time she answered him—possibly because he had not looked at her.

‘Such never sleep,’ she said.

‘Do you know that too?’ he asked, not in a tone that wanted reply.

She made no answer.

‘I am sorry,’ he went on. ‘For me it is different. I am a man. I have man’s work to do. I can occupy myself with ambition. At all events, I have a man’s privilege of nursing revenge.’

He saw her eyes light up, her breast heave with a sudden sigh. Something like a smile wavered for a moment beneath his waxed moustache.

Catrina’s fingers, supple and strong, struck in great chords the air of a gloomy march from the half-forgotten muse of some monastic composer. While she played, Claude de Chauville proceeded with his delicate touch to play on the hidden chords of an untamed heart.

‘A man’s privilege,’ he repeated musingly.

‘Need it be such?’ she asked.

For the first time his eyes met hers.

‘Not necessarily,’ he answered, and her eyes dropped before his narrow gaze.

He sat back in his chair, content for the moment with the progress he had made. He glanced at the countess. He was too experienced a man to be tricked. The countess was really asleep. Her cap was on one side, her mouth open. A woman who is pretending to sleep usually does so in becoming attitudes.

De Chauville did not speak again for some minutes. He sat back in his chair, leaning his forehead on his hand, while he peeped through his slim fingers. He could almost read the girl’s thoughts as she put them into music.

‘She does not hate him yet,’ he was reflecting. ‘But she needs only to see him with Etta a few times and she will come to it.’

The girl played on, throwing all the pain in her passionate, untamed heart into the music. She knew nothing of the world; for half of its temptations, its wiles, its wickednesses were closed to her by the plain face that God had given her. For beautiful women see the worst side of human nature—they usually deal with the worst of men. Catrina was an easy tool in the hands of

such as Claude de Chauxville; for he had dealt with women and that which is evil in women all his life, and the only mistakes he ever made were those characteristic errors of omission attaching to a persistent ignorance of the innate good in human nature. It is this same innate good that upsets the calculations of most villains.

Absorbed as she was in her great grief, Catrina was in no mood to seek for motives—to split a moral straw. She only knew that this man seemed to understand her as no one had ever understood her. She was content with the knowledge that he took the trouble to express and to show a sympathy of which those around her had not suspected her to be in need.

The moment had been propitious, and Claude de Chauxville, with true Gallic insight, had seized it. Her heart was sore and lonely—almost breaking—and she was without the worldly wisdom which tells us that such hearts must, at all costs, be hidden from the world. She was without religious teaching—quite without that higher moral teaching which is independent of creed and conformity, which is only learnt at a good mother's knee. Catrina had not had a good mother. She had had the countess—a weak-minded, self-indulgent, French novel-reading woman. Heaven protect our children from such mothers!

In the solitude of her life Catrina Lanovitch had conceived a great love—a passion such as a few only are capable of attaining, be it for their weal or woe. She had seen this love ignored—walked under foot by its object with a grave deliberation which took her breath away when she thought of it. It was all in all to her; to him it was nothing. Her philosophy was simple. She could not sit still and endure. At this time it seemed unbearable. She must turn and rend some one. She did not know whom. But some one must suffer. It was in this that Claude de Chauxville proposed to assist her.

'It is preposterous that people should make others suffer and go unpunished,' he said, intent on his noble purpose.

Catrina's eyelids flickered, but she made no answer. The soreness of her heart had not taken the form of a definite revenge as yet. Her love for Paul was still love, but it was perilously near to hatred. She had not reached the point of wishing definitely that he should suffer, but the sight of Etta—beautiful, self-confident, carelessly possessive in respect to Paul—had brought her within measurable distance of it.

'The arrogance of those who have all that they desire is insupportable,' the Frenchman went on in his favourite, non-committing, epigrammatic way.

Catrina—a second Eve—glanced at him, and her silence gave him permission to go on.

'Some men have a different code of honour for women, who are helpless.'

Catrina knew vaguely that unless a woman is beloved by the object of her displeasure, she cannot easily make him suffer.

She clenched her teeth over her lower lip. As she played, a new light was dawning in her eyes. The music was a marvel, but no one in the room heard it.

'I would be pitiless to all such men,' said De Chauville. 'They deserve no pity, for they have shown none. The man who deceives a woman is worthy of——'

He never finished the sentence. Her deep, passionate eyes met his. Her hands came down with one final crash on the chords. She rose and crossed the room.

'Mother,' she said, 'shall I ring for tea?'

When the countess awoke, De Chauville was turning over some sheets of music at the piano.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A WINTER SCENE.

BETWEEN Petersburg and the sea there are several favourite islands more or less assigned to the foreigners residing in the Russian capital. Here the English live, and in summer the familiar cries of the tennis-lawn may be heard, while in winter snow-shoeing, skating, and tobogganing hold merry sway.

It was here, namely on the island of Christeffsky, that a great ice *fête* was held on the day preceding the departure of the Howard-Alexis household for Tver. The *fête* was given by one of the foreign ambassadors, a gentleman whose wife was accredited to the first place in Petersburg society. It was absolutely necessary, Steinmetz averred, for the whole Howard-Alexis party to put in an appearance.

The *fête* was supposed to begin at four in the afternoon, and by five o'clock all St. Petersburg—all, *c'est à dire*, worthy of

mention in that aristocratic city—had arrived. One may be sure Claude de Chauville arrived early, in beautiful furs with a pair of silver-plated skates under his arm. He was an influential member of the Cercle des Patineurs in Paris. Steinmetz arrived soon after, to look on, as he told his many friends. He was, he averred, too stout to skate and too heavy for the little iron sleds on the ice-hills.

‘No, no!’ he said, ‘there is nothing left for me but to watch. I shall watch De Chauville,’ he added, turning to that graceful skater with a grim smile. De Chauville nodded and laughed.

‘You have been doing that any time these twenty years, *mon ami*,’ he said, as he stood upright on his skates and described an easy little figure on the outside edge backwards.

‘And have always found you on slippery ground.’

‘And never a fall,’ said De Chauville over his shoulder, as he shot away across the brilliantly lighted pond.

It was quite dark. A young moon was rising over the city, throwing out in dark relief against the sky a hundred steeples and domes. The long, thin spire of the Fortress Church—the tomb of the Romanoffs—shot up into the heavens like a dagger. Near at hand, a thousand electric lights and coloured lanterns, cunningly swung on the branches of the pines, made a veritable fairyland. The ceaseless song of the skates, on ice as hard as iron, mingled with the strains of a band playing in a kiosk with open windows. From the ice-hills came the swishing scream of the iron runners down the terrific slope. The Russians are a people of great emotions. There is a candour in their recognition of the needs of the senses which does not obtain in our self-conscious nature.

These strangely constituted people of the North—a budding nation, a nation which shall some day overrun the world—are easily intoxicated. And there is a deliberation about their methods of seeking this enjoyment which appears at times almost brutal. There is nothing more characteristic than the ice-hill.

Imagine a slope as steep as a roof, paved with solid blocks of ice, which are subsequently frozen together by flooding with water; imagine a sledge with steel runners polished like a knife; imagine a thousand lights on either side of this glittering path, and you have some idea of an ice-hill. It is certainly the

strongest form of excitement imaginable—next, perhaps, to whale-fishing.

There is no question of breathing, once the sledge has been started by the attendant. The sensation is somewhat suggestive of a fall from a balloon, and yet one goes to the top again, as surely as the drunkard will return to his bottle. Fox-hunting is child's play to it, and yet grave men have prayed that they might die in pink.

Steinmetz was standing at the foot of the ice-hill when an arm was slipped within his.

'Will you take me down?' asked Maggie Delafield.

He turned and smiled at her—fresh and blooming in her furs.

'No, my dear young lady. But thank you for suggesting it.'

'Is it very dangerous?'

'Very. But I think you ought to try it. It is a revelation. It is an epoch in your life. When I was a younger man I used to sneak away to an ice-hill where I was not known, and spend hours of the keenest enjoyment. Where is Paul?'

'He has just gone over there with Etta.'

'She refuses to go?'

'Yes,' answered Maggie.

Steinmetz looked down at his companion with his smile of quiet resignation.

'You tell me you are afraid of mice,' he said.

'I hate mice,' she replied. 'Yes—I suppose I am afraid of them.'

'The princess is not afraid of *rats*—she is afraid of very little, the princess, and yet she will not go on the ice-hill. What strange creatures, mademoiselle! Come, let us look for Paul. He is the only man who may be trusted to take you down.'

They found Paul and Etta together in one of the brilliantly lighted kiosks where refreshments were being served, all hot and steaming, by fur-clad servants. It was a singular scene. If a coffee-cup was left for a few moments on the table by the watchful servitors, the spoon froze to the saucer. The refreshments—bread and butter, dainty sandwiches of caviare, of *pâté de fois gras*, of a thousand *Delicatessen* from Berlin and Petersburg—were kept from freezing on hot-water dishes. The whole scene was typical of life in the northern capital, where wealth wages a successful fight against climate. Open fires burned brilliantly in iron tripods within the doorway of the tent, and at intervals in the gardens. In a

large hall a string band consoled those whose years or lungs would not permit of the more vigorous outdoor entertainments.

Steinmetz made known to Paul Maggie's desire to risk her life on the ice-hills, and gallantly proposed to take care of the princess until his return.

'Then,' said Etta gaily, 'you must skate. It is much too cold to stand about. They are going to dance a cotillon.'

'If it is your command, princess, I obey with alacrity.'

Etta spoke rapidly, looking round her all the while with the bright enjoyment which overspreads the faces of some women at almost any form of entertainment, provided there be music, brilliant lights, and a crowd of people. One cannot help wondering a little what the minds of such fair ladies must consist of to be thrown off their balance by such outward influences. Etta's eyes gleamed with excitement. She was beautifully dressed in furs, which adornment she was tall and stately enough to carry to full advantage. She held her graceful head with regal hauteur, every inch a princess. She was enjoying her keenest pleasure—a social triumph. No whisper escaped her, no glance, no nudge of admiring or envious notice. On Steinmetz's arm she passed out of the tent; the touch of her hand on his sleeve reminded him of a thoroughbred horse stepping on to turf, so full of life, of electric thrill, of excitement was it. But then Karl Steinmetz was a cynic. No one else could have thought of comparing Etta's self-complaisant humour to that of a horse in a racing paddock.

They procured skates and glided off hand in hand, equally proficient, equally practised, maybe on this same lake; for both had learnt to skate in Russia.

They talked only of the present, of the brilliancy of the *fête*, of the music, of the thousand lights. Etta was quite incapable of thinking or talking of any other subject at that moment.

Steinmetz distinguished Claude de Chauxville easily enough, and avoided him with some success for a short time. But De Chauxville soon caught sight of them.

'Here is Monsieur de Chauxville,' said Etta, with a pleased ring in her voice. 'Leave me with him. I expect you are tired.'

'I am not tired, but I am obedient,' replied Steinmetz, as the Frenchman came up with his fur cap in his hand, bowing gracefully. Claude de Chauxville usually overdid things. There is something honest in a clumsy bow which had no place in his courtly obeisance.

Although Steinmetz continued to skate in a leisurely way, he also held to his original intention of looking on. He saw Paul and Maggie come back to the edge of the lake, accompanied by an English lady of some importance in Russia, with whom Maggie presently went away to the concert-room.

Steinmetz glided up to Paul, who was lighting a cigarette at the edge of the pond, where an attendant stood by an open wood-fire with cigarettes and hot beverages.

'Get a pair of skates,' said the German. 'This ice is marvellous—colossa-a-a-l.'

He amused himself with describing figures, like a huge grave-minded boy, until Paul joined him.

'Where is Etta?' asked the prince at once.

'Over there with De Chauville.'

Paul said nothing for a few moments. They skated side by side round the lake. It was too cold to stand still even for a minute.

'I told you,' remarked Paul at length, 'that that fellow is coming to Thors.'

'I wish he would go to the devil,' said Steinmetz.

'No doubt he will in time,' answered Paul carelessly.

'Yes; but not soon enough. I assure you, Paul, I do not like it. We are just in that position that the least breath of suspicion will get us into endless trouble. The authorities know that Stepán Lanovitch has escaped. At any moment the Charity League scandal may be resuscitated. We do not want fellows like De Chauville prowling about. I know the man. He is a d——d scoundrel who would sell his immortal soul if he could get a bid for it. What is he coming to Thors for? He is not a sportsman; why, he would be afraid of a cock pheasant, though he would be plucky enough among the hens. You don't imagine he is in love with Catrina, do you?'

'No,' said Paul sharply, 'I don't.'

Steinmetz raised his bushy eyebrows. Etta and De Chauville skated past them at that moment, laughing gaily.

'I have been thinking about it,' went on Steinmetz, 'and I have come to the conclusion that our friend hates you personally. He has a grudge against you of some sort. Of course he hates me, *cela va sans dire*. He has come to Russia to watch us. That I am convinced of. He has come here bent on mischief. It may be that he is hard up and is to be bought. He is always to be bought, *ce bon De Chauville*, at a price. We shall see.'

Steinmetz paused and glanced at Paul. He could not tell him more. He could not tell him that his wife had sold the Charity League papers to those who wanted them. He could not tell him all that he knew of Etta's past. None of these things could Karl Steinmetz, in the philosophy that was his, tell to the person whom they most concerned. And who are we that we may hold him wrong? The question of telling and withholding is not to be dismissed in a few words. But it seems very certain that there is too much telling, too much speaking out and too little holding in, in these days of much publicity. There is a school of speakers-out, and would to heaven they would learn to hold their tongues! There is a school for calling spades by no other name, and they have still to learn that the world is by no means interested in their chatter of shovels. The psalmist knew much of which he did not write, and the young men of the modern school of poesy and fiction know no more, but they lack the good taste of the singer of old. That is all.

Karl Steinmetz was a man who formed his opinion on the best basis—namely, experience, and that had taught him that a bold reticence does less harm to one's neighbour than a weak volubility.

Paul was an easy subject for such treatment. His own method inclined to err on the side of reticence. He gave few confidences and asked none, as is the habit of Englishmen.

'Well,' he said, 'I do not suppose he will stay long at Thors, and I know that he will not stay at all at Osterno. Besides, what harm can he actually do to us? He cannot well go about making inquiries. To begin with, he knows no Russian.'

'I doubt that,' put in Steinmetz.

'And even if he does, he cannot come poking about in Osterno. Catrina will give him no information. Maggie hates him. You and I know him. There is only the countess.'

'Who will tell him all she knows! She would render that service to a droski driver.'

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

There was no mention of Etta. They stood side by side, both thinking of her, both looking at her, as she skated with De Chauville. There lay the danger, and they both knew it. But she was the wife of one of them, and their lips were necessarily sealed.

'And it will be permitted,' Claude de Chauville happened to

be saying at that moment, 'that I call and pay my respects to an exiled princess?'

'There will be difficulties,' answered Etta, in that tone which makes it necessary to protest that difficulties are nothing under some circumstances—the which De Chauxville duly protested with much fervour.

'You think that twenty miles of snow would deter me,' he said.

'Well, they might.'

'They might if—well——'

He left the sentence unfinished—the last resource of the sneak and the coward who wishes to reserve to himself the letter of the denial in the spirit of the meanest lie.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOME.

A TEARING, howling wind from the north—from the boundless snow-clad plains of Russia that lie between the Neva and the Yellow Sea; a grey sky washed over as with a huge brush dipped in dirty whiting; and the plains of Tver a spotless, dazzling level of snow.

The snow was falling softly and steadily, falling, as it never falls in England, in little more than fine powder, with a temperature forty degrees below freezing-point. A drift—constant, restless, never altering—sped over the level plain like the dust on a high-road before a steady wind. This white scud—a flying scud of frozen water—was singularly like the scud that is blown from the crest of the waves by a cyclone in the China Seas. Any object that broke the wind—a stunted pine, a broken tree-trunk, a Government road-post—had at its leeward side a high, narrow snow-drift tailing off to the dead level of the plain. Where the wind dropped the snow rose at once. But these objects were few and far between. The deadly monotony of the scene—the trackless level, the preposterous dimensions of the plain, the sense of distance that is conveyed only by the steppe and the great desert of Gobi when the snow lies on it—all these tell the same grim truth to all who look on them, the old truth that man is but a small thing and his life but the flower of grass.

Across the plain of Tver, before the north wind, a single sleigh

was tearing as fast as horse could lay hoof to ground—a sleigh driven by Paul Howard-Alexis, and the track of it was as a line drawn from point to point across a map.

A striking feature of the winter of Northern Russia is the glorious uncertainty of its snowfalls. At Tver the weather-wise had said :

‘The snow has not all fallen yet. More is coming. It is yellow in the sky, although March is nearly gone.’

The landlord of the hotel (a good enough resting-place facing the broad Volga) had urged upon Monsieur le Prince the advisability of waiting, as is the way of landlords all the world over. But Etta had shown a strange restlessness, a petulant desire to hurry forward at all risks. She hated Tver; the hotel was uncomfortable, there was an unhealthy smell about the place.

Paul acceded readily enough to her wishes. He rather liked Tver. In a way he was proud of this busy town—a centre of Russian civilisation. He would have liked Etta to be favourably impressed with it, as any prejudice would naturally reflect upon Osterno, a hundred and forty miles across the steppe. But with a characteristic silent patience he made the necessary preparations for an immediate start.

The night express from St. Petersburg had deposited them on the platform in the early morning. Steinmetz had preceded them. Closed sleighs from Osterno were awaiting them. A luxurious breakfast was prepared at the hotel. Relays of horses were posted along the road. The journey to Osterno had been carefully planned and arranged by Steinmetz—a king among organisers. The sleigh drive across the steppe was to be accomplished in ten hours.

The snow had begun to fall as they clattered across the floating bridge of Tver. It had fallen ever since, and the afternoon lowered gloomily. In America such visitations are called ‘blizzards,’ here in Russia it is merely ‘the snow.’ The freezing wind is taken as a matter of course.

At a distance of one hundred miles from Tver, the driver of the sleigh containing Etta, Maggie, and Paul had suddenly rolled off his perch. His hands were frost-bitten; a piteous blue face peered out at his master through ice-laden eyebrows, moustache, and beard. In a moment Maggie was out in the snow beside the two men, while Etta hastily closed the door.

‘He is all right,’ said Paul; ‘it is only the cold. Pour some

brandy into his mouth while I hold the ice aside. *Don't* take off your gloves. The flask will stick to your fingers.'

Maggie obeyed with her usual breezy readiness, turning to nod reassurance to Etta, who, truth to tell, had pulled up the rime-covered windows, shutting out the whole scene.

'He must come inside,' said Maggie. 'We are nice and warm with all the hot-water cans.'

Paul looked rather dubiously towards the sleigh.

'You can carry him, I suppose?' said the girl cheerfully. 'He is not very big—he is all fur coat.'

Etta looked rather disgusted, but made no objection, while Paul lifted the frozen man into the seat he had just vacated.

'When you are cold I will drive,' cried Maggie, as Paul shut the door. 'I should love it.'

Thus it came about that a single sleigh was speeding across the plain of Tver.

Paul, with the composure that comes of a large experience, gathered the reins in his two hands, driving with both and with extended arms, after the manner of Russian yemshiks. For a man must accommodate himself to circumstance, and fingerless gloves are not conducive to a finished style of handling the ribbons.

This driver knew that the next station was twenty miles off; that at any moment the horses might break down or plunge into a drift. He knew that in the event of such emergencies it would be singularly easy for four people to die of cold within a few miles of help. But he had faced such possibilities a hundred times before in this vast country, where the standard price of a human life is no great sum. He was not, therefore, dismayed, but rather took delight in battling with strong elements, as all strong men should, and most of them, thank Heaven, do.

Moreover he battled successfully, and before the moon was well up drew rein outside the village of Osterno, to accede at last to the oft-repeated prayer of the driver that he might return to his task.

'It is not meet,' the man had gruffly said whenever a short halt was made to change horses, 'that a great prince should drive a yemshik.'

'It is meet,' answered Paul simply, 'for one man to help another.'

Then this man of deeds and not of words clambered into the sleigh and drew up the windows, hiding his head as he drove

through his own village, where every man was dependent for life and being on his charity.

They were silent, for the ladies were tired and cold.

'We shall soon be there,' said Paul reassuringly. But he did not lower the windows and look out, as any man might have wished to do, on returning to the place of his birth.

Maggie sat back, wrapped in her furs. She was meditating over the events of the day, and more particularly over a certain skill, a quickness of touch, a deft handling of stricken men which she had noted far out on the snowy steppe a few hours earlier. Paul was a different man when he had to deal with pain and sickness: he was quicker, brighter, full of confidence in himself. For the great sympathy was his—that love of the neighbour which is thrown like a mantle over the shoulders of some men, making them different from their fellows, securing to them that love of great and small which, perchance, follows some when they are dead to that place where a human testimony may not be all in vain.

At the castle all was in readiness for the prince and princess, their departure from Tver having been telegraphed. On the threshold of the great house, before she had entered the magnificent hall, Etta's eyes brightened, her fatigue vanished. She played her part before the crowd of bowing servants with that forgetfulness of mere bodily fatigue which is expected of princesses and other great ladies. She swept up the broad staircase, leaning on Paul's arm, with a carriage, a presence, a dazzling wealth of beauty, which did not fail to impress the onlookers. Whatever Etta may have failed to bring to Paul Howard-Alexis as a wife, she made him a matchless princess.

He led her straight through the drawing-room to the suite of rooms which were hers. These consisted of an ante-room, a small drawing-room, and her private apartments beyond.

Paul stopped in the drawing-room, looking round with a simple satisfaction in all that had been done by his orders for Etta's comfort.

'These,' he said, 'are your rooms.'

He was no adept at turning a neat phrase—at reeling off a pretty, honeymoon welcome. Perhaps he expected her to express delight, to come to him, possibly, and kiss him, as some women would have done.

She looked round critically.

'Yes,' she said, 'they are very nice.'

She crossed the room and drew aside the curtain that covered the double-latticed windows. The room was so warm that there was no rime on the panes. She gave a little shudder, and he went to her side, putting his strong, quiet arm around her.

Below them, stretching away beneath the brilliant moonlight, lay the country that was his inheritance, an estate as large as a large English county. Immediately beneath them, at the foot of the great rock upon which the castle was built, nestled the village of Osterno—straggling, squalid.

'Oh!' she said dully, 'this is Siberia. This is terrible.'

It had never presented itself to him in that light, the wonderful stretch of country over which they were looking.

'It is not so bad,' he said, 'in the daylight.'

And that was all; for he had no persuasive tongue.

'That is the village,' he went on, after a little pause. 'Those are the people who look to us to help them in their fight against terrible odds. I hoped—that you would be interested in them.'

She looked down curiously at the little wooden huts, half buried in the snow; the smoking chimneys; the twinkling curtainless windows.

'What do you expect me to do?' she asked in a queer voice.

He looked at her in a sort of wonderment. Perhaps it seemed to him that a woman should have no need to ask such a question.

'It is a long story,' he said; 'I will tell you about it another time. You are tired now, after your journey.'

His arm slipped from her waist. They stood side by side. And both were conscious of a feeling of difference. They were not the same as they had been in London. The atmosphere of Russia seemed to have had some subtle effect upon them.

Etta turned and sat slowly down on a low chair before the fire. She had thrown her furs aside, and they lay in a luxurious heap on the floor. The maids, hearing that the prince and princess were together, waited silently in the next room behind the closed door.

'I think I had better hear it now,' said Etta.

'But you are tired,' protested her husband. 'You had better rest until dinner time.'

'No; I am not tired.'

He came towards her and stood with one elbow on the mantel-

piece, looking down at her—a quiet, strong man, who had already forgotten his feat of endurance of a few hours earlier.

‘These people,’ he said, ‘would die of starvation and cold and sickness if we did not help them. It is simply impossible for them in the few months that they can work the land to cultivate it so as to yield any more than their taxes. They are overtaxed, and no one cares. The army must be kept up and a huge Civil Service, and no one cares what happens to the peasants. Some day the peasants *must* turn, but not yet. It is a question for all Russian landowners to face, and nobody faces it. If any one tries to improve the condition of his peasants—they were happier a thousand times as serfs—the bureaucrats of Petersburg mark him down and he is forced to leave the country. The whole fabric of this Government is rotten, but every one, except the peasants, would suffer by its fall, and therefore it stands.’

Etta was staring into the fire. It was impossible to say whether she heard with comprehension or not. Paul went on:

‘There is nothing left, therefore, but to go and do good by stealth. I studied medicine with that view. Steinmetz has scraped and economised the working of the estate for the same purpose. The Government will not allow us to have a doctor; they prevent us from organising relief and education on anything like an adequate scale. They do it all by underhand means. They have not the pluck to oppose us openly. For years we have been doing what we can. We have almost eradicated cholera. They do not die of starvation now. And they are learning—very slowly, but still they are learning. We—I—thought you might be interested in your people; you might want to help.’

She gave a short little nod. There was a suggestion of suspense in her whole being and attitude, as if she were waiting to hear something which she knew could not be avoided.

‘A few years ago,’ he went on, ‘a gigantic scheme was set on foot. I told you a little about it—the Charity League.’

Her lips moved, but no sound came from them, so she nodded a second time. A tiny carriage-clock on the mantelpiece struck seven, and she looked up in a startled way, as if the sound had frightened her. The castle was quite still. Silence seemed to brood over the old walls.

‘That fell through,’ he went on, ‘as I told you. It was betrayed. Stepán Lanovitch was banished. He has escaped, however; Steinmetz has seen him. He succeeded in destroying

some of the papers before the place was searched after the robbery—one paper in particular. If he had not destroyed that, I should have been banished. I was one of the leaders of the Charity League. Steinmetz and I got the thing up. It would have been for the happiness of millions of peasants if it had not been betrayed. In time—we shall find out who did it.’

He paused. He did not say what he would do when he had found out.

Etta was staring into the fire. Her lips were dry. She hardly seemed to be breathing.

‘It is possible,’ he went on in his strong, quiet, inexorable voice, ‘that Stepán Lanovitch knows now.’

Etta did not move. She was staring into the fire—staring—staring.

Then she slowly fainted, rolling from the low chair to the fur hearthrug.

Paul picked her up like a child and carried her to the bedroom, where the maids were waiting to dress her.

‘Here,’ he said, ‘your mistress has fainted from the fatigue of the journey.’

And, with his practised medical knowledge, he himself tended her.

(To be continued.)

THE VALLEY OF THE DUDDON.

WORDSWORTH has immortalised the Duddon. It is the only Lake District stream (it hardly seems to merit the more grandiloquent name of river) which he has followed in loving verse from its source to its mouth. He devotes no fewer than thirty-four sonnets to it, which, if we exclude its seven or eight miles of tidal water, gives a record of about two sonnets to the mile. There is not another river in the world thus dignified. One marvels that this honour of itself has not procured for the Duddon valley a carriage-road, to enable pilgrims at Wordsworth's shrine of all conditions of bodily strength to make this pleasant pilgrimage book in hand. But to the pedestrian it will assuredly seem that things are better as they are.

For my part, I approached the Duddon, eager with expectation, from the south. It was mid-July, and the country was odorous with cut hay. But the weather was far from auspicious for a walk into the heart of the Lake District mountains, where Duddon springs into young being. The sky was hid by a pack of storm clouds, swollen like the cheeks of a tombstone cherub, and speeding from that dampest of quarters, the south-west. Now and again oases of silver-grey showed between the clouds; else there was no hint of the sun. I rejoiced that the day was near its end, and all I hoped was that I might get housed, safe and dry, at Ulpha ere the looming night rains broke upon the green rocky landscape.

I had tarried at Broughton for the finishing of one tremendous shower, and listened there in the inn to the arguments between mine host and two stranded gipsies about the medical treatment of a lockjawed horse. Hard by was a baker's house (a tiny shop) with an unusual board over its door, declaring that 'one piece of bread' would be given here, 'to be eaten on the premises,' to any one passing through the town 'direct' until 10 P.M. The institution of this local feat of charity is due to a certain lady. It seems adapted to help the hungry vagrant into the next parish rather than aught else. I asked if it was appreciated, and was told that there were days when twenty or thirty people might be seen standing waiting for their turn. There could be no doubt that it was appreciated. Both the gipsies and the landlord then united in lamenting the hardness of the times. But I could not

help remarking that the former drank a pint of beer each even during my brief spell of shelter.

From Broughton to Ulpha it is five rough miles, with an immediate ascent followed by a descent to the meadows which here hug both shores of the Duddon. I soon came to the first, or last, of the river's bridges; the railway viaduct further seaward being put out of count. Beneath it the stream ran fast and deep and clear. A solitary angler was testing it where with common luck at such a time he might have killed a salmon. Beyond him the water zigzagged towards the sea—

Over smooth flat sands
Gliding in silence with unfettered sweep!

Wordsworth here calls it 'majestic Duddon.' Seen with the tide up, it may well be that, and then the contrast between it and the same river only fifteen or eighteen miles north is strong. But in a dry season and at low tide there will be little water at the bridge. I congratulated myself on the wild weather in the mountains, and turned my back on the dull pink of the sands and Barrow's distant chimneys with their long horizontal lines of smoke.

Duddon's charms lie inland. I was soon introduced to some of them. As I climbed the steep road of the valley, I had heathery knolls before me and high hedgerows tangled with honeysuckle, beneath which pansies and foxgloves and meadowsweet abounded. The uncut fields were white with ox-eye daisies. The bracken among the rocks was of the fervent green which is never so well shown forth as by recent rain and present clouds. The air was bracing and good to breathe as it blew in lustily from the darkened sea. Occasional grey farmsteads clung to the slopes between the road and the river, thickly shadowed by sycamores and huge cherry trees. A thin column of blue smoke rose from Duddon Hall on the west side of the river: straight as a lakeland pine until it reached the zone of the wind, which of a sudden wrecked its symmetry. Then the Hall's classic portico appeared, and the Duddon itself, now white with fretting. Ever in front were the cloud-capped mountains, while off and on the nearer fells also donned their headgear of mist. So for an hour and a half, with fitful rain squalls, and the river's singing unintermittent. Then the whitewashed cottages of Ulpha in the hollow came as an encouragement. I had on the whole dodged the storms fairly. And I was glad in the gloaming to sit in the parlour of 'The Traveller's Rest' (in my landlord's coat, with sleeves six inches too long for

me), and listen to the rain and the wind, which were at times almost too much even for the Duddon's vigorous voice, chanting just outside.

Wordsworth says—

The Kirk of Ulpha to the pilgrim's eye
Is welcome as a star that doth present
Its shining forehead through the peaceful rent
Of a black cloud diffused o'er half the sky.

I am not ashamed to substitute 'inn' for 'Kirk,' and apply the altered verse to myself and this particular night. But in the morning I transferred my allegiance to the 'Kirk.' It is one of those plain, small, unpretending buildings which give character to so many of the Lake District dales. Though dating from the time of the Plantagenets, it makes no conspicuous claim to regard for its age. Its low body and whitewashed walls carry a tiny bell-tower with two bells, and its 'wave-washed churchyard' holds the dust of many generations of stout yeomen of the valley. They live long here by the Duddon. I was told of the death of eleven persons in the district whose ages in the aggregate came to about a thousand. In two cases quite recently husband and wife had died within a few hours of each other, in the eighties. In the one case the people far and near followed with extreme, though kindly, interest the gradual waning of life in the old couple. Some thought the dame would die first, and some her husband. Eventually the old lady led the way, but the old man's lamp went out the next day, and they were both buried at the same time.

A stout but expiring race these 'statesmen' (to give them their largest title) of the Lake District dales! They have their share of self-esteem, too, as honest men should. The Vicar of Ulpha had many good words to say of them, and so had a commercial traveller who chanced to be at the inn. The man who can pass muster with his clergyman and his business agent cannot be without virtues. The traveller, however, added something which gives another touch to their portrait: 'Let me make a mistake with them, and they never forget it.' One can understand that after very little intercourse with them. Anything in the nature of a slight they feel as if it were a wound. They have the sensitiveness of all solitaries. This, probably, more than aught else, explains their curtness to the stranger. The word 'sir' comes with difficulty to the lips of their farm hands, bred under the same condition as themselves: the open-air life puts men on a

certain footing of equality, if not of brotherhood. And of the statesmen it may be said that they prefer not to risk a chance snub from a townsman, whom they think (rightly enough as a rule) their inferior in all respects save his glibness of speech and dexterity in certain superficial and certain other undesirable accomplishments.

During the restoration of Ulpha Church a few years back some eighty sets of human bones were disinterred from beneath the flooring. They had evidently lain there for centuries. In the words of the vicar, 'They must have been a huge people in those days;' the size of the bones testified thereto. It is the offspring of such stock as this who still inhabit Duddon Valley, and seem entitled to see fourscore years pass ere they join their forefathers in the 'kirkyard.'

The night at Ulpha ushered in a dismal morning, with drenching rain and expunged fell-tops, while I somewhat despondently ate ham and eggs for my breakfast. For a companion I had a youth in his shirt-sleeves. He had come to the inn after ten o'clock the previous evening, wet to the skin, and all but belated on the mountains. His 'cuticle of civilisation' was still drying at the kitchen fire. Between us we watched the weather with sombre interest. Duddon's voice had grown furious in the night, and now the two cypresses in the inn garden before our window seemed to bow and rustle appealingly in the rain-charged wind. However, I had made up my mind to see Duddon to its birthplace, and I had ere this had wide experience of the variability, for good as well as ill, of the Lake District weather. And so, in a break of the clouds, I set off, prepared for the worst, though hopeful of better things.

Nor was I unrewarded. For an hour I trod in showers, abrupt and vigorous, which kept the lanes fresh with the smell of thirsty flowers. One, heavier than the rest, drove me into a farmhouse. I sat in an old-time room with dark rafters and a tall grandfather's clock (of Winster, that source of so many tall clocks), and the women-folk, less reserved than their lieges, entertained me with pleasant talk. The postman joined me in sheltering. He had a fishing-rod in his hand, as well as the letter-bag on his back. I could have envied him so simple a union of pleasure and business. But after this rest the day grew more and more amiable. The sun broke through the mist and clouds, which looked so black against the innocent mountain-sides. It shone upon a glorious

landscape of glittering green meadows (more and more compressed, with the narrowing of the valley), crimson heather, foaming rills from the rocks, as well as 'torrents white' of more assuming quality, and especially the Duddon itself, here frantic with haste and filling with its resonant roar all the space between the mountains. In this gladsome company I came to the Stepping Stones of Seathwaite—hallowed metropolis of the valley.

The Stepping Stones of Wordsworth's ninth sonnet must not be identified with these by Seathwaite, but with others higher up the stream. Yet Seathwaite's stones also ought to have been memorialised. A prettier spot of its kind cannot be imagined. You come to the river's brink through cool woods of young trees, and leave it on the other side for Seathwaite Church, bowered in trees, its tiny belfry showing significantly amid the foliage. But on a day like this the Stepping Stones were not for me. The water stormed high over them. Only with legs of iron, as thick as the stem of a matured pine-tree, would I have tackled the crossing at such a time. There is, however, a frail footbridge adjacent for use on occasions like the present. I would have dallied on it, mid stream, watching the Duddon's struggles towards the sea, had I felt confidence in its delicacy to support my weight. The river's eddies of foam, pearl grey and pale green, were a spectacle worth beholding. And the bold crag of Wallow-barrow, close alongside, gave noble natural framing to the picture. Here, if anywhere, on a day like this, the Duddon seemed a peer in beauty, as well as in strength, of the nobler Scottish streams. The old Chapel of Seathwaite (Seath'ut they call it locally: indeed, all the district 'waites' are treated with the same disrespect) has been restored off the face of the earth. 'Wonderful Walker,' the parish priest, or 'Gospel teacher,' as Wordsworth terms him, 'whose good works formed an endless retinue,' would recognise his old temple only in its surroundings. The monstrous yew still stands in the little churchyard, and his parsonage, whence he supplied home-brewed ale to his flock after morning services, has altered mainly in the increased density of its coat of ivy. Walker was a model man of the old dale type: a 'statesman' at heart, he was also the guide, companion, and friend as well as lawyer, doctor, schoolmaster, and clergyman of his widely scattered flock.

Such priest as Chaucer sang in fervent lays;
Such as the Heaven-taught skill of Herbert drew;
And tender Goldsmith crowned with deathless praise.

The man who could attract upon him three such lines from Wordsworth must have been remarkable. The living was worth 5*l.* a year when he began his curacy. He held it sixty-seven years and died wealthy. The plain dark slate slab recumbent in the churchyard tells us he died at ninety-two, having survived his wife two years, she also living to ninety-two.

There have been other Walkers at Seathwaite since 1802, when the 'Wonderful' departed, and a Walker still holds the living. The Rev. Edward Tyson, who died here in 1854, after more than fifty years' service as incumbent, may almost be bracketed with the first Walker for his length of days. He lived to the age of eighty-four, and 'his wife Betty' lived only one year less. But his virtues have not been sung by a Wordsworth, and so we know nothing of him save what his tombstone tells us.

One would like to see some memorial of the 'Wonderful Walker' in the church other than the small brass tablet on the north wall. The present church would adorn Mayfair. Like the parsonage as it is now, it may be called bijou. With its organ, eagle lectern, handsome brass chandelier, swing lamps, triple-light east window, stained (each light in memory of a Walker), mat-covered floor, pine pews, and slim wooden rafters, all lovingly tended, it is a surprising contrast to some of the other district churches. The very church key is a neat little brass thing, convenient for the pocket. There is nothing about the place in the least degree suggestive of the times when 'the Wonderful' made Seathwaite famous. All is modern, clean, natty, and picturesque. The present incumbent is a bachelor. His cats (some fourteen or fifteen in number) stroll sedately in companies about the churchyard, or adventure up the road by the babbling brook in quest of newly fledged birds. One of them sat washing its face on a square tomb. They made a pretty, if unexpected, picture, environed by the glossy black old yew, the trim stone church, and the sunlit leaves of many trees.

Seathwaite 'chapel' proffers a special appeal to visitors towards its needs. Nor does it appeal in vain. According to the methodical record by the porch, from 1883 to 1893, annual sums have been taken from the money-box for the purpose, ranging between 1*l.* 9*s.* in 1884 to 2*s.* 10*d.* in 1886. The relative smallness of the amounts may be ascribed less to the parsimony of the strangers than to Duddon Valley's remoteness.

When I left Seathwaite, with reluctance, the sun had fought

and conquered the clouds. The becksides boulders were blue against the green meadows in the dazzling light. Long House gill, Tarn Beck (a tributary from Seathwaite Tarn, seven or eight hundred feet above, in the fells), and Duddon itself all made wild music within a stone's cast of the church. Conversation would have been difficult here. But there was no one to talk to: nothing in sight save the waters, their rocky and green banks, the cleared mountains, and the exhilarating heavens.

Duddon grinds through a gorge just above this charming little spot. It is lost to view from the track, but its noise tells of its efforts, though one is apt to think but lightly of them, so gay are the crimsoned superincumbent rocks, with their lower drapery in the cleft of 'green alders,' silver birch, and mountain-ashes.

Hence the river narrows rapidly. Not so the valley, however. This keeps a wide margin of rough rocky pasture on each side to the very birthplace of the stream, with sheep and cattle dotting its surface. The Seathwaite Fells showed their craggy outline on the right hand, Harter Fell's conspicuous nodule ruled to the left, and Sca Fell's lieutenants stood up bold and black in front. The farmsteads in the four remaining miles to Cockley Beck are so few that they seem entitled to be marked on the map. And each keeps its retinue of colley dogs of doubtful disposition, who dash forth at the stranger with unnecessary demonstrations of interest, as he goes (with the track) right through the heart of each farmyard in succession. I like not these mountain sheep-dogs when they are on no specific service. They have tasted my homespun twice. But the Duddon pilgrim must put up with them.

Birks Bridge, halfway between Seathwaite and Cockley Beck, is the scene of the last and most sensational of Duddon's frolics. Here the river is forced between rocks (smoothened by its wintry capers) which in one place are but three feet apart. For a score or two yards the spectacle on this day was demoniacal. The pale green waters were all aboil as they tossed from one rocky ledge and terrace to another. On a quiet day the rapid would be but a poor attempt at the sublime. To-day one's feelings did homage to it. I was told that the river here has exacted tribute of human lives. It is credible enough. There would be no hope for the man whose arms failed him a few yards above the Birks Bridge defile. The bridge itself is a pretty graceful object, but it lacks

paintable surroundings. I should like to wrest the fifteenth sonnet into a dedication to the spot:

From this deep chasm—where quivering sunbeams play
Upon its loftiest crags.

I am afraid, however, that it will not apply. Wordsworth seems indeed to have neglected Birks Bridge. Perhaps he was never here after heavy rain.

More farmyards, and the sight of one on the right bank shrouded in sycamores so that it seemed to merit its name of Black Hall, and more colley dogs. Cockley Beck is thus attained—itself a farmhouse of the hard, cold, mountain type, prim without and prim within, and furnished as to its sitting-rooms with china ornaments and prints of a terrible description. Sca Fell lifts a forbidding shoulder at the top of the Mosedale glen towards the north-west, its summit only some four miles from the farm. Here little Duddon enjoys its last (or first) bridge. Looking up the pass called Wrynose Bottom (repellent name!), I could see its source less than two miles away. It no longer froths and tumbles head over heels, but merely speeds, in a relatively level bed, sparkling like a diamond and the colour of one.

Cockley Beck stands about seven hundred feet above the sea. Its rooms were cold and bleak. They are accustomed to provide bread and cheese and oatcake for the hungry, but they cannot be used to seeing people hurry over their meals as I here hurried over mine. Outside the sun had again departed, and Sca Fell was drawing a cloud round his head. But the outer air, though cool, was genial compared with the pent Puritanic rawness of the farmstead's domestic atmosphere. There was a hammering in the house while I trifled with the milk and cheese. I could almost have sworn they were nailing the master of the house in his coffin. Wordsworth has nothing about Cockley Beck, though in all likelihood he too once ate oatcake and marigold-hued cheese inside it. It is a pity. One would have enjoyed contrasting impressions with him about so dreary a spot. Yet, doubtless, there is plenty of happiness here, even in mid-winter, with the railway at Broughton twelve wellnigh impracticable miles away.

It was the beginning of the end. From Cockley Beck the slim but impetuous stripling of a stream is followed to the north-east through a barren, cheerless mountain depression. But it receives help from all sides—a pleasant prerogative of youth. From Red How and Cold Pike to the north, and the steep slopes

of Carrs and Grey Friar to the south especially, tumultuous threads of ice-cold water flash to the little Duddon in the Bottom, and swell it yard by yard. We are now at the second sonnet of Wordsworth's thirty-four, one of the most vigorous of them all :

Child of the clouds ! remote from every taint
Of sordid industry thy lot is cast ;
Thine are the honours of the lofty waste ;
Not seldom, when with heat the valleys faint,
Thy handmaid frost with spangled tissue quaint
Thy cradle decks ; to chant thy birth thou hast
No meaner poet than the whistling blast,
And desolation is thy patron saint !
She guards thee, ruthless power ! who would not spare
Those mighty forests, once the bison's screen,
Where stalked the huge deer to his shaggy lair
Through paths and alleys roofed with sombre green,
Thousands of years before the silent air
Was pierced by whizzing shaft of hunter keen !

The ascent to the top of Wrynose Pass is a gradual climb of about six hundred feet from Cockley Beck. It would be a rather dismal business but for the Duddon. This pure, fresh, bright babbling (it would bear even more adjectives of the eulogistic kind) seems to encourage one forward. Only towards the summit of the pass does its voice lose power. But it has then done its work. Looking back one sees the trellis of cascades which united form this 'Child of the Clouds.' They make a choir of pretty infant voices, soothing and sweet as the distant murmur of bees. From one brackeney recess and another the rills gush downwards, eagerly as boys long for life's earnest fray. And above black crags frown upon the easier slopes whence, amidst heather and rocks, the springs break forth into the light.

This is Duddon's birthplace.

STROLLERS.

¹ Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show.¹

If critics are sincere in the prayer they make nowadays for greater simplicity in stage-management—if their imaginations truly do hunger for an exercise of which they are deprived by the too luxurious realism of the modern stage—they might perhaps find their aspirations suited, and their expectations not wholly disappointed, by laying themselves in the way of one of the lowlier class of strolling companies which still stalk the country, and by visiting an opening performance in some district where the audience is as nearly rustic as it is possible to get it in these evil days of indiscriminating civilisation.

They are advised to try for a first night, because, with strolling companies, the first night is pre-eminently the people's night. The *élite* of the neighbourhood are invited later on to a Shaksperian revival, on which occasion the strollers strive to ape their inferiors in town, and the fashionable craze of the day for over-representation. To a first night, therefore, we give the lover of all that is primitive a cordial recommendation to go; and will now, by a short narrative of our own experience, offer him a sample of the glorious fare that is likely to fall to him.

It is a windy night, with a *souppçon* of rain in it, which has come to preside over the opening of a strolling company's theatre in the small midland town where we are staying. The canvas roof of the booth makes a great flapping; and the wooden walls rock—with wind from without, and with the surging of pittites from within; for the doors have been open some while—when we, for sixpence, obtain a stall in the second row from the stage. People who like to air their legs may pay a shilling, and sit out in front; but on first nights the shilling seats stay empty.

The place is too full of wind to be called draughty: against the two central poles of the booth swing flaring oil-lamps, which roar noisily when the winds threaten to put them out. They manage to keep alight, however, causing a very Rembrandtesque effect while at variance with the powers of the air. To us a Rembrandtesque effect always gives a suggestion of strife between

forces of darkness and light—darkness becoming an active *force*, a radiating power; and one gets a pleasant feeling, akin to excitement, in watching it. Here the powers of darkness, allied with the powers of the air, seemed striving to bring about a general collapse: the shadows bounded along the roof, till they grasped at the tent-pole; the wind worried it in its socket; then, as the wind fell off, the lamps flared up angrily, and away skipped the shadows to the back corners.

From these things our attention is called by the noise of the orchestra: a man, smuggling under an overcoat the makings of a stage-villain, is winding it round by the handle. The stamping populace in the rear sober down to take in this foretaste of the feast. Happily it is a brief one, and so does not dispel the imaginative turn our thoughts have taken.

Now the manager comes before the curtain, and announces the overwhelming respectability of his company: nothing will take place here to raise a blush on the most modest cheek; whereat the pit jeers good-humouredly, wondering, no doubt, what there is on the face of this earth which could make it blush. 'Our company,' the manager goes on to say, 'wintered in the cathedral town of Hereford; and any of you who know what a cathedral town means will understand that no company, which was not of unimpeachable respectability, would be allowed by the dean and chapter to stay so long.

As we are probably alone in having any clear idea of what a cathedral town means, and what sort of fearful fowl a dean and chapter is, we enjoy the joke in separateness of spirit. But, to do the manager justice, he gave us no occasion to blush.

Now comes the play, for the curtain struggles in its rising. The play is, and the females of the play are, 'Faith, Hope, and Charity,' these three, and the greatest of these is certainly Charity.

Charity is a big strapping wench—*so* big, and *so* strapping! Run a tape round her, lengthways and breadthways, as you do round a package to see if it comes within the official limitations for parcel post, and you may get her within sixteen feet more or less, probably more. She is an admirable low comedian—and really is it to be wondered at, bred as she has been on the applause she wins, that she plays low down for it?—the pit is in raptures over her, and sets the rear of the theatre reeling with its hobnailed plaudits.

The manager comes in as an old man, with a poor tattered suit of clothes on his back, and a snarl for ever in his mouth. He snarls when he passes the rich man's door to the right; in the centre he says his prayers, and, crossing over to the left, knocks at the poor widow's door. She, after a short difficulty with the door, manages to scrape herself through the opening, and comes out. She is Faith, the mother of Hope and Charity. The old snarler offers her a basket of vegetables, which a 'friend has sent her.' She does not much believe in the vegetables, Faith does not; but, with her mind set on 'things not seen,' plunges her hand deep down under the cabbages and brussels-sprouts, and fetches forth a bag of money. In another minute we learn that this comes from habit.

'Oh, you good old man! this is the third time I have received means for paying my rent on the very day that it is due! Who is it that is so good to the poor lone fatherless widow?' She walks to the centre, and prays. The old man weeps, snarls, and goes; while Faith, discovering by a rapid forecast that in the next scene the cottage is going to be a freehold, pockets the cash and goes shopping.

Then follows a love scene between the good young son of the bad Squire, and Charity. The part of the Squire's son is taken by a weak-chinned, weedy little woman, with a pronounced bust, which a loose over-jacket, to the best of its buttons and ability, makes effort to conceal; but as the poor young man has but one only attitude, to which, after all others, he finally returns—whether for expressing love, hatred, grief, courage, or despair—and that one the laying of an arm over his 'middle so small,' his clothing does not afford a very effectual concealment. He is constantly giving himself the most amazing digs in the waist, at which the waist, so seemingly solid, promptly collapses.

Charity makes love to him enough for two: he staggers under her kisses, and suffocates in her embraces. She chucks him under the chin, and he hangs his head simpering.

The house finds there is pleasant comedy in all this; and we too find comedy, perhaps in other ways, while the pit roars its applause. Charity looks across the footlights genuinely pleased with the audience, and with herself.

But now comes the bad Squire, breaking in upon this sweet idyl, and there begins a bad quarter of an hour for his son. Charity, however, does not desert her lover at a pinch; whatever

grounds the Squire stands on, she cuts them from under him. Hear her! 'What business have you in my mother's gyarden?' Her mother's gyarden for this occasion reaches to the Squire's front door; that, we suppose, is the reason why the Squire is so anxious to give the widow notice to quit.

Having obtained the title-deeds by theft, as he tells the audience in an aside, he is now in a position to give that widow 'the sack.'

The little episode of the rent has played its part, and is forgotten; the ownership of the cottage now depends on the possession of title-deeds, and these accordingly have henceforth to be stolen, smuggled, forged, picked from pockets, and found in underground passages, as follows hereafter.

When the Squire lets Charity know that her mother's position is precarious and depends on his will and pleasure, Charity's fingers go snap in his face; at which the pit awakes its jovial thunders. Charity is willing to humour her audience with any mood whatever, so she gives right thumb and forefinger yet another snap, then ditto with the left, and then all together—a volley. After the louder roar which follows, she finds safety in tweaking the Squire's nose.

Anywhere else this would be vulgar—very vulgar; but here the amazingest things are spontaneous—they are at once natural and poetical. The Squire's house, the widow's cottage, the garden—which we have to imagine—have wrought us up to a poetic pitch from which we cannot loose ourselves. We are beholding what other eyes, the most sincere and native in the land, find to be both poetry and life: Life—the size of life, and twice as natural. The widow has at last noticed a noise, and, coming out, receives a week's warning to quit. Proudly she sends her daughter Hope to fetch the title-deeds. Of course they are gone. 'You never had them,' says the Squire in triumph. He speaks her mild, however, and will let her stay on if he may be allowed to pay his addresses to 'Miss 'Ope,' whom it is his crowning wickedness to love. The whole family rejects him with scorn; even his son plucks up heart to say that he will not have *him* for a brother-in-law.

Now the plot thickens into deep murkiness, as all retire but the Squire; and the old tatterdemalion comes on to threaten him in words of mystery. The pit has been waiting for its mystery, and now it has it. In every play there must be mystery—some-

thing that cannot be explained. So now begins mystery—real mystery, not to be explained. It never *is* explained; that is its beauty—the audience will presently be able to go home with a mystery on its conscience. The Squire is at last left alone, to stagger about his own doorstep and now and then trespass into the too contiguous garden of the widow—also to send for the stage-villain, who dresses like a bandit, and wears a glimmering of repentance in the corner of one eye. He is straightway despatched to knock the tatterdemalion's brains out; and, while he is absent, the Squire deposits a casket of jewels in the raspberry-canes behind the widow's house.

Then the villain returns to demand blood-money; but the Squire, who is a J.P., denies all knowledge, and warns him out of the country on pain of death. So the stage-villain retires, with hatred more than glimmering in his baffled eye.

And now, in the nick of time, Hope trips in, carrying the casket. The Squire catches her, sends for a policeman, and sentences her, then and there, to a month's imprisonment. The family kneel and implore; they can prove an *alibi*, or something of that sort, if he will wait till to-morrow. He relents to the extent that he will allow Miss 'Ope to be locked up for the night in his own house instead of in the jail (his asides at this time are full of devilry); and the grateful, foolish family tears itself in two with weeping and smiles of reassurance.

Next the Squire warns his son into the wide wide world to seek a living; and the house being now left clear of anybody but the Squire and his prisoner, night falls with lightning celerity.

In steals the villain, waving a match-box, and creeps to the rear of the Squire's dwelling. The breathless audience hears the spurt of a match, then there fizzles a rosy magnesian light, and, in an instant, the house is suffused with fire, red-hot as a furnace.

Faith and Charity come rushing, fresh from slumber, and Hope's name resounds above the roaring of the flames. 'Me daughter-r-r!' in a shrill blast of lungs from the mother, fetches the villain full of heroism and repentance. He had no idea, he says confusedly, while calling for a ladder, that Miss Hope was staying at the Squire's; but oh! for a ladder, and he will save her yet. Charity brings him a kitchen chair; through the chinks of the burning house we see Hope running to be rescued—her beautiful head and arms appear through a window, and commence

waving. The chair on which the villain stands is rickety, the villain's legs are rickety, and the burning house is most rickety of all. Hope is half in and half out, and then sticks. The suspense is too dreadful in more ways than one—to the audience in one way, and to the villain and walls of the crumbling mansion in quite another. Is she hopelessly jammed? Are her legs catching fire while her beautiful head and arms gesticulate for help, and the villain totters under her weight, but cannot draw her forth? Charity to the rescue! Charity opens the door of the house a little way, and gives her sister a vigorous hoist up. She is out like a pellet from a popgun, and the curtain comes down to sounds of sobbing and prayer.

Must not joy and delight be crowned in a scene like this? Is it not to be expected that the rest of the play will abate somewhat in novelty and interest? Wait, wait, only wait!

The stage-villain has come out, and has got the orchestra by the handle. There is religion in the music it begins to pour forth: 'Poor old Joe,' the 'Waft her, angels' of rustic audiences, rubs shoulders with the 'Rock of Ages,' and the curtain rises on Faith lying a-dying. She has always trained up her daughters in the way they should go, and she now makes them go through their Catechism, as a preparation for facing the world alone.

The tatterdemalion is there with his head in bandages; he forgives the repentant villain on the spot when the latter comes to receive the thanks of the dying mother. Oh, that mother! How she dies! She has the advantage of a peculiarly bilious expression, with which to emphasise the pains of death; and now for the first time she begins to roll her eyes about. She rolls them on to the Squire when he enters, on eviction intent, and almost floors him.

Then she tells him to repent; so does Hope; so does Charity; so also does the stage-villain—very impressively, all the while stealing the title-deeds from the Squire's coat-tail pocket, whence they have been conspicuously protruding since his entry.

But the Squire is anxious only to complete his business; he gets a little more courage now that those dreadful eyes have ceased to roll on him. Suddenly Hope and Charity lift up their voices with an exceeding bitter cry; the tatterdemalion strikes the Squire's hat from his head—'Take off your 'at, sir,' he says impressively; 'you are in the presence of the dead.'

In the next scene the funeral is over; and the sense that the

Catechism alone will not help them through the world strikes the lonely hearts of the two poor girls. Hope, the religious one, says, 'Let us pray to our mother to help us!' and Charity's knees thump the boards in obedience to her word. Then says Hope, 'Mother, look down on your children, and help us!' Whereat the drop-scene, which represents the wall of a room, begins to lift itself; with many creaks, and a few jolts on the way, it trundles expeditiously to the top. A white light is fizzling away in the wings, and we see a glaring vision of a large cross of rock-salt, supported on the one side by a horrible wax angel, and on the other by the bilious-looking mamma. The cross is toppled slightly sideways, depending on the mamma for support, since the wax angel can do nothing; only his glass eye glares horribly in the limelight from its projecting socket. As soon as the limelight has burnt itself out, down trundles the drop-scene, and the sisters go forth into the wide wide world to fight the powers of darkness with scraps from the Catechism.

In the last act the inevitable takes place in a few dashing incidents. The Squire's son returns, within a fortnight, with a large fortune. The Squire hires a new villain to throw Miss Hope down a well, which he does in a perfectly blood-curdling manner, and is caught in the act by the other villain—the repentant one. Then enters Charity, and goes to the well's brink, making heart-rending appeals to her departed sister. The Squire turns up with another title-deed, and proves the one taken out of his pocket to have been but a copy. But Hope turns up also, without a bruise on her beautiful body, and bringing with her the one true and genuine title-deed.

'Why! I thought I ordered you to be thrown down this well, Miss 'Ope,' cries the Squire incontinently, and is taken into custody by the policeman for saying so.

'Yes,' says Hope, 'but my hair caught in some creepers, and broke my fall, and the well was dry, and I found a little door which led up some steps into a room, where I found the true title-deed, and a lot of money besides which belonged to my great-grandfather.'

Every one believes her, so all ends happily. The tatterdemalion turns out to be the girls' uncle, once wicked, but now good, and very very rich.

The converted villain slips out, and round to the orchestra, and once more the drop-scene (this time involving in its folds a bridge, a field, a village church, and a few cows) rolls itself heavenward.

Heaven has not cured the mother of her sullen and bilious expression even yet ; and she and the wax angel vie with each other in hideousness ; the cross is as sideways as ever, but the mother holds it up sturdily ; the limelight fizzles out its brief life, and the orchestra grinds down the curtain to the tune of 'Rock of Ages.'

So the primitive pageant is over ; and we think, and mourn to think, how much great London misses from not having its stage matters conducted thus, and no otherwise.

This we know—we have no memory of the stage so vivid, or so diverse from all others, as this one of 'Faith, Hope, and Charity'—a play containing much sweetness and light of a certain sort, such as cannot readily be spared by those who value poetry in nature, and simplicity in poetry. And this is the play of which we have attempted to give a faithful and unvarnished account to the critics of Cockneydom.

And oh ! manager of that company, whose name we no longer remember, if your eye should light upon these lines, and remind you that it is your intention once more to make circuit of our midlands, let us know of your seasons and your whereabouts, and we will try once more to follow the leadings of a willing fancy, and cross country to join you.

A BLACK FOREST WEDDING.

WE have come within easy distance of the end of our holiday, and find ourselves high and dry at Triberg with nothing particular to do. A waterfall is always charming, and the fact of the one at Triberg being lit up at night by electricity of course renders it particularly so; but even waterfalls pall upon the tourist in time. It is distinctly dull at Triberg. In fact, two members of our party have already fallen into bitter recrimination upon the subject of our having come there at all, when to us enters our host—spectacled, beaming, enthusiastic.

There is a wedding at X. to-day—a *real* Black Forest wedding, *comme il y en a peu*. There has not been a wedding like this for fifty years. X. is the highest village in the Black Forest, and it is the daughter of the principal farmer of the district who is to be married, with all suitable pomp and ceremonies. Would not the Herrschaften like to drive up the mountain to see it?

The Herrschaften jump at the idea. A real Black Forest wedding? By all means! the very thing! It will be so interesting to see the quaint wedding ceremonies, and to watch the simple peasants enjoying themselves. The two malcontents are reconciled at once, and begin a cheerful hunt for wraps and guide-books. One of our party immediately provides himself with a large note-book in which to record his impressions, and we all start in the best of spirits.

Down the steep street we clatter, past the little windows filled with clocks and carvings, over the bridge, and up into the lonely mountain road. On the right hand the mountains tower above us, covered with the solemn green of the pine-trees; on the left we look down a sheer and terrible descent, also clothed with the blackish-green of the trees. A lonely road; steep, and not too wide. Our linguist inquires of the driver, with some anxiety, as to the probable results of a carriage coming *down* at the same time; but he gains no satisfaction thereby, the reply being couched in the broadest patois, not to be understood of the ordinary tourist. Up and up we go. Here and there a lonely village; here and there a tiny chalet or a solitary charcoal-burner's hut; but no carriages, no foot-passengers—nothing but the clattering

tramp of the eight iron-shod hoofs, the everlasting pine-trees, the thin, clear air high above us, and the silence of the mountains all around.

The highest village in the Black Forest is rather disappointing when we at length reach it. A long, dusty street of mean-looking white houses, with small windows and heavy roofs, can *not* be considered picturesque in appearance, whatever its altitude may be; and it is only the sentimental member of our party who murmurs under her breath, 'How interesting!' A collection of carts of the roughest description, that have brought guests from afar, stand in a melancholy row down one side of the street. There is one inn—a square whitewashed building with a shabby little portico in front—which inn is evidently the very centre and focus of the festivity, to judge by the rear view of villagers crowding round the open window. As we drive up the ugly street and alight at the inn-door, we are surrounded by boys and girls proffering bunches of the cheapest and commonest artificial flowers. These evidently constitute the necessary wedding-garment; every human being we see is decorated with their dreary tawdriness.

Our linguist makes inquiry of a dirty waiter who comes forward cheerfully to meet us, and learns with some difficulty that the ceremony took place at twelve, and that the wedding-feast commenced directly after, and is still going on. It is an indisputable fact that the waiter is drunk; but he manages to show us the way to the scene of festivity, and to take the order for a bottle of wine in which to drink the health of the wedded couple.

It is a large square room with plastered walls, and unadorned, except by two or three coarse coloured prints. It is only furnished with a number of long trestle tables and forms, and round these tables are crowded the wedding guests, stolidly and continuously eating enormous cherry tarts and drinking new wine. There is nothing festive about them, and they are not beautiful to behold. The women are dressed in an ugly fashion; they wear black bodices and short black skirts, plaited into an astounding thickness at the waist, and some of them have hideous tight-fitting black silk caps, tied closely under their chins with wide black strings. It would take a very pretty woman to stand the effect of this costume, and the requisite amount of beauty is not forthcoming in X. But the bride and her bridesmaids (about fifty in number) are more gorgeously arrayed, inasmuch as they

wear crowns—monstrous erections of glass beads, glittering balls, artificial flowers, and bits of tinsel, all fixed upon a cardboard foundation that towers a good foot and a half in height, and overshadows the wearer's head and face. It is wonderful how they can bear the weight of them. The men are some in peasant costume, and some in ordinary dress; there is little of the picturesque mountaineer of our imagination about them.

Our entrance does not cause any surprise. The revellers stare at us for a moment with strange, stupid faces. The bride and bridegroom, seated silently and stolidly side by side, take no notice of us at all as we take our seats near the door, after bowing politely to the company. It is a strange assembly. The air is heavy with the fumes of wine and tobacco, and the square, heavy German faces loom through a cloud of smoke. There is no laughter, no jesting; only a subdued growl of guttural speech. Now and then one of the women strikes up a song, and her shrill voice breaks sharply into the dull murmur of voices. She sings a verse or two in a monotonous sing-song, and then drops into silence again. More wine, more cherry tarts. From overhead comes a heavy, measured thumping on the floor, and the twanging of a couple of fiddles. One of the wedding guests has gone to sleep already, with his head fallen forward on the smeary table. The two small windows are filled up by the villagers, who look on from the outside, and who have evidently had their share of wine. They shout remarks through the windows which seem to be of such an exceedingly jocular character, that we are thankful our knowledge of the patois does not permit us to appreciate them at their full value.

A little of this festivity goes a long way: let us go upstairs and see the dancing. It is not easily seen through the clouds of dust that fill the room. The floor is trembling under the rhythmic shock of the heavy feet; the walls echo to the shriek of the fiddles; and in the midst of the dust and noise the wedding guests dance the hop waltz with terrible energy. There is no graceful languor about their performance, no ease of motion; it is real hard work, and they go at it with a will. The men hold their partners firmly round the waist; the girls clasp their arms round the necks of the men; and thus solidly fastened together they gyrate in heavy-breathing solemnity. Some of the bridesmaids are dancing, still crowned with their tinsel magnificence, which shakes perilously at every hop; they look anxious, and now

and then stop to adjust themselves. When the dancers are tired out and can hop no more, they descend to consume more wine and cherry tarts, and some of the replete ones below ascend to take their places.

The landlord has appeared by this time—a stout man, very urgent in his invitations to take more wine, and to join more freely in the festivities; and our linguist inquires of him whether there is anything more to see, or if this comprises all the wedding ceremonies. Not by any means, it seems. The dancing and eating and drinking will continue all night and all the next day. In the evening the bridegroom will claim his bride, and all the girls of the village will form a circle around her, and refuse to give her up. Then the bridegroom will offer to buy her, and the girls will demand so much wine as her price; and when that is given she will be surrendered to him.

‘And then it is all over?’ we suppose. Not at all. The wine paid for the bride has to be drunk, and the dancing will be kept up through the night, and there will be more feasting and more dancing for the rest of the week. This, we must understand, is a *real* Black Forest wedding of the old style. The English imagination shudders at the prospect.

In the meantime it is growing dark, and they have lighted two great lamps in the banqueting room. We have seen enough, and are anxious to depart; the simple mountaineers do not improve in their manners as the feast continues. But neither carriage nor driver appears, and there is nothing for it but for our linguist to go in search of them, while we wait in the porch. Looking through the windows of the great room, we see the bride and bridegroom still seated side by side, silent and unsmiling, but the guests are becoming noisier, and do not look the better for their increased liveliness.

Here comes our driver at last, but, alas! he is not of much use. He has a lady upon each arm; he has been drinking the bride’s health, and is unsteady of utterance and much uplifted in spirits—not to say drunk. He is not singular in this respect; every soul in the village is more or less intoxicated; yet the horses must be harnessed, and we set to work ourselves, with a drunken ostler holding an unsteady lantern by way of assistance.

Dark figures waver and plunge about in the shadows, and form a derisive crowd around us; the wedding guests are roaring the chorus of a patois song within; the smoky, yellow light from

the windows lights up the crowd of silly, drunken faces, laughing, gaping, distorted, now in the flare, now in the shadow : a shifting phantasmagoria, an ugly dream. They are dancing now outside the inn as well as inside ; some of the men climb up and hold on to the carriage, with hideous grimaces and shouts of laughter. It is certainly time to be off.

At last it is done, and with some difficulty the driver is extricated from the crowd and persuaded to mount the box. The frightened horses rear and plunge, and the peasants fall back ; we get away with a dash and scramble, swaying from one side of the street to the other under the guidance of the drunken coachman and pursued with drunken laughter and shouts. One uncouth figure starts in aimless pursuit, but he cannot get far, and reels and falls heavily on the rough stones.

The flare of coarse light and the ugly distorted faces disappear behind us, though we still hear the rough voices and high-pitched laughter. The dark stillness of the mountain road comes as a blessed relief when we are finally out of sight and hearing of the *real* Black Forest wedding. The driver is dispossessed of his reins as a preliminary, and falls into a drunken slumber. Down we go—through the black shadows of the trees, and across the moonlit spaces where the light is as clear as day—past the little dim villages, where the dogs bark hoarsely as we go by, and the dull tinkle of a cow-bell sounds out of the dark woods beyond ; down and down through the dewy night, with a clatter and tramp of hoofs, with due caution as to corners and renewed anxiety as to meeting another carriage ; till the cluster of lights below spreads out and broadens into the tiny town, and we roll over the bridge into Triberg again.

THE STORY OF BESSIE COSTRELL.¹

BY MRS. HUMPHRY WARD.

SCENE V.

So the husband and wife were left together in the cottage room. The door had no sooner closed on Saunders and his companions than Isaac was seized with that strange sense of walking amid things unreal upon a wavering earth which is apt to beset the man who has any portion of the dreamer's temperament, under any sudden rush of circumstance. He drew his hand across his brow, bewildered. The fire leapt and chattered in the grate; the newly washed tea-things on the table shone under the lamp; the cat lay curled, as usual, on the chair where he sat after supper to read his 'Christian World'; yet all things were not the same. What had changed?

Then across poor John's rifled box he saw his wife sitting rigid on the chair where he had left her.

He came and sat down at the corner of the table, close to her, his chin on his hand.

'Ow did yer spend it?' he said, startled, as the words came out, by his own voice, so grinding and ugly was the note of it.

Her miserable eyes travelled over his face, seeking, as it were, for some promise, however faint, of future help and succour, however distant.

Apparently she saw none, for her own look flamed to fresh defiance.

'I didn't spend it. Saunders wor lyin.'

'Ow did yer get them half-crowns?'

'I got 'em at Bedford. Mr. Grimstone give 'em me.'

Isaac looked at her hard, his shame burning into his heart. This was how she had got her money for the gin. Of course, she had lied to him the night before, in her account of her fall, and of that mark on her forehead, which still showed, a red disfigurement, under the hair she had drawn across it. The sight of it, of her, began to excite in him a quick loathing. He was at bottom a man of violent passions, and in the presence of evil-doing so

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flagrant, so cruel—of a household ruin so complete—his religion failed him.

'When was it as yer opened that box fust?' he asked her again, scorning her denials.

She burst into a rage of tears, lifting her apron to her eyes, and flinging names at him that he scarcely heard.

There was a little cold tea in a cup close to him that Bessie had forgotten. He stretched out his hand, and took a mouthful, moistening his dry lips and throat.

'Yer'll go to prison for this,' he said, jerking it out as he put the cup down.

He saw her shiver. Her nerve was failing her. The convulsive sobs continued, but she ceased to abuse him. He wondered when he should be able to get it out of her. He himself could no more have wept than iron and fire weep.

'Are yer goin to tell me when yer took that money, and 'ow yer spent it? 'Cos, if yer don't, I shall go to Watson.'

Even in her abasement it struck her as shameful, unnatural, that he, her husband, should say this. Her remorse returned upon her heart, like a tide driven back. She answered him not a word.

He put his silver watch on the table.

'I'll give yer two minutes,' he said.

There was silence in the cottage except for the choking, hysterical sounds she could not master. Then he took up his hat again, and went out into the snow, which was by now falling fast.

She remained helpless and sobbing, unconscious of the passage of time, one hand playing incessantly with a child's comforter that lay beside her on the table, the other wiping away the crowding tears. But her mind worked feverishly all the time, and gradually she fought herself free of this weeping, which clutched her against her will.

Isaac was away for an hour. When he came back, he closed the door carefully, and, walking to the table, threw down his hat upon it. His face under its ruddy brown had suffered some radical disintegrating change.

'They've traced yer,' he said hoarsely; 'they've got it up to twenty-six pound, an more. Most on it 'ere in Clinton—some on it, Muster Miles o' Frampton ull swear to. Watson ull go over to Frampton, for the warrant—to-morrer.'

The news shook her from head to foot. She stared at him wildly—speechless.

'But that's not arf,' he went on—'not near arf. Do yer 'ear? What did yer do with the rest? I'll not answer for keepin my 'ands off yer if yer won't tell.'

In his trance of rage and agony, he was incapable of pity. He had small need to threaten her with blows—every word stabbed.

But her turn had come to strike back. She raised her head; she measured her news against his; and she did it with a kind of exultation.

'Then I *will* tell yer—an I 'ope it ull do yer good. I took thirty-one pound o' Bolderfield's money then—but it warn't me took the rest. Some one else tuk it, an I stood by an saw 'im. When I tried to stop 'im—look 'ere.'

She raised her hand, nodding, and pointing to the wound on her brow.

Isaac leant heavily on the table. A horrible suspicion swept through him. Had she wronged him in a yet blacker way? He bent over her, breathing fast—ready to strike.

'Who was it?'

She laughed. 'Well, it wor *Timothy* then—yur precious—beautiful son—Timothy!'

He fell back.

'Yore lyin,' he cried; 'yer want to throw it off on some one. How cud Timothy 'ave 'ad anythin to do with John's money? Timothy's not been near the place this three months.'

'Not till lasst night,' she said, mocking him. 'I'll grant yer—not till lasst night. But it *do* 'appen, as lasst night Timothy took forty-one pound o' John Borroful's money out o' that box, an got off—clean. I'm sorry if yer don't like it—but I can't 'elp that; yo listen 'ere.'

And lifting a quivering finger she told her tale at last, all the beginning of it confused and almost unintelligible, but the scene with Timothy vivid, swift, convincing—a direct impression from the ugly immediate fact.

He listened, his face lying on his arms. It was true, all true. She might have taken more and Timothy less; no doubt she was making it out as bad as she could for Timothy. But it lay between them—his wife and his son—it lay between them.

'An I 'eard yer coming,' she ended; 'an I thought I'd tell yer—an I wor frightened about the arf-crowns—people 'ad been talkin so at Dawson's—an I didn't see no way out—an—an—'

She ceased, her hand plucking again at the comforter, her throat working.

He, too, thought of the loving words he had said to her, and the memory of them only made his misery the more fierce.

'An there aint no way out,' he said violently, raising his head. 'Yer'll be took before the magistrates next week, an the assizes ull be in February, an yer'll get six months—if yer don't get more.'

She got up from her chair as though physically goaded by the words.

'I'll not go to jail,' she said under her breath. 'I'll not——'

A sound of scorn broke from Isaac.

'You should ha' thought o' that,' he said. 'Yo should ha' thought o' that. An what you've been sayin about Timothy don't make it a 'aporth the better—not for *you*! Yo led 'im into it too—if it 'adn't been for yo, ee'd never ha' *seen* the cursed stuff. Yo've dragged 'im down worse nor ee were—an yerself—an the childer—an me. An the drink, an the lyin!—it turns a man's stomach to think on it. An I've been livin with yer—these twelve years. I wish to the Lord I'd never seen yer—as the children ud never been born! They'll be known all their life now—as 'avin 'ad sich a woman for their mother!'

A demon of passion possessed him more and more. He looked at her with murderous eyes, his hand on the table working.

For his world, too, lay in ruins about him. Through many hard-working and virtuous years he had counted among the righteous men of the village—the men whom the Almighty must needs reckon to the good whenever the score of Clinton Magna had to be made up. And this pre-eminence had come to be part of the habitual furniture of life and thought. To be suddenly stripped of it—to be, not only disgraced by his wife, to be thrust down himself among the low and sinful herd—this thought made another man of him; made him wicked, as it were, perforce. For who that heard the story would ever believe that he was not the partner of her crime? Had he not eaten and drunk of it; were not he and his children now clothed by it?

Bessie did not answer him nor look at him. At any other moment she would have been afraid of him; now she feared nothing but the image in her own mind—herself led along the village street, enclosed in that hateful building, cut off from all pleasure, all free moving and willing—alone and despised—her children taken from her.

Suddenly she walked into the back kitchen and opened the door leading to the garden.

Outside everything lay swathed in white, and a snowstorm was drifting over the deep cup of land which held the village. A dull, melancholy moonlight seemed to be somewhere behind the snow curtain, for the muffled shapes of the houses below and the long sweep of the hill were visible through the dark, and the objects in the little garden itself were almost distinct. There, in the centre, rose the round stone edging of the well, the copious well, sunk deep into the chalk, for which Bessie's neighbours envied her, whence her good nature let them draw freely at any time of drought. On either side of it the gnarled stems of old fruit-trees and the bare sticks of winter kail made black scratches and blots upon the white.

Bessie looked out, leaning against the doorway, and heedless of the wind that drove upon her. Down below there was a light in Watson's cottage, and a few lights from the main street beyond pierced the darkness. The 'Spotted Deer' must be at that moment full of people, all talking of her and Isaac. Her eye came hastily back to the snow-shrouded well and dwelt upon it.

'Shut that door!' Isaac commanded from inside. She obeyed, and came back into the kitchen. There she moved restlessly about a minute or two, followed by his frowning look—the look, not of a husband, but of an enemy. Then a sudden animal yearning for rest and warmth seized her. She opened the door by the hearth abruptly and went up, longing simply to lie down and cover herself from the cold.

But, after all, she turned aside to the children, and sat there for some time at the foot of the little boys' bed. The children, especially Arthur, had been restless for long, kept awake and trembling by the strange sounds outside their door and the loud voices downstairs; but, with the deep silence that had suddenly fallen on the house after Isaac had gone away to seek his interview with Watson, sleep had come to them, and even Arthur, on whose thin cheeks the smears left by crying were still visible, was quite unconscious of his mother. She looked at them from time to time, by the light of a bit of a candle she had placed on a box beside her; but she did not kiss them, and her eyes had no tears. From time to time she looked quickly round her, as though startled by a sound, a breathing.

Presently, shivering with cold, she went into her own room.

There, mechanically, she took off her outer dress, as though to go to bed; but when she had done so her hands fell by her side; she stood motionless till, suddenly wrapping an old shawl round her, she took up her candle and went downstairs again.

As she pushed open the door at the foot of the stairs, she saw Isaac, where she had left him, sitting on his chair, bent forward, his hands dropping between his knees, his gaze fixed on a bit of dying fire in the grate.

'Isaac!'

He looked up with the unwillingness of one who hates the sound he hears, and saw her standing on the lowest step. Her black hair had fallen upon her shoulders, her quick breath shook the shawl she held about her, and the light in her hand showed the anguished brightness of the eyes.

'Isaac, are yer comin up?'

The question maddened him. He turned to look at her more fixedly.

'Comin up? noa, I'm not comin up—so now yer know. Take yerself off, an be quick.'

She trembled.

'Are yer goin to sleep down 'ere, Isaac?'

'Aye, or wherever I likes: it's no concern o' yourn. I'm no 'island o' yourn from this day forth. Take yerself off, I say!—I'll 'ave no thief for *my* wife!'

But instead of going she stepped down into the kitchen. His words had broken her down; she was crying again.

'Isaac, I'd ha' put it back,' she said imploring. 'I wor goin in to Bedford to see Mr. Grimstone—ee'd ha' managed it for me. I'd a worked extra—I could ha' done it—if it 'adn't been for Timothy. If you'll 'elp—an you'd oughter, for yer *are* my 'island, whativver yer may say—we could pay John back—some day. Yo can go to 'im, an to Watson, an say as we'll pay it back—yo *could*, Isaac. I can take ter the plattin again, an I can go an work for Mrs. Drew—she asked me again lasst week. Mary Anne ull see to the childer. You go to John, Isaac, to-morrer—an—an—to Watson. All they wants is the money back. Yer *couldn't*—yer couldn't—see me took to prison, Isaac.'

She gasped for breath, wiping the mist from her eyes with the edge of her shawl.

But all that she said only maddened the man's harsh and pessimist nature the more. The futility of her proposals, of her

daring to think, after his fiat and the law's had gone forth, that there was any way out of what she had done, for her or for him, drove him to frenzy. And his wretched son was far away; so he must vent the frenzy on her. The melancholia, which religion had more or less restrained and comforted during a troubled lifetime, became on this tragic night a wild-beast impulse that must have its prey.

He rose suddenly and came towards her, his eyes glaring, and a burst of invective on his white lips. Then he made a rush for a heavy stick that leant against the wall.

She fled from him, reached her bedroom in safety, and bolted the door. She heard him give a groan on the stairs, throw away the stick, and descend again.

Then for nearly two hours there was absolute stillness once more in this miserable house. Bessie had sunk, half fainting, on a chair by the bed, and lay there, her head lying against the pillow.

But in a very short time the blessed numbness was gone, and consciousness became once more a torture, the medium of terrors not to be borne. Isaac hated her—she would be taken from her children—she felt Watson's grip upon her arm—she saw the jeering faces at the village doors.

At times a wave of sheer bewilderment swept across her. How had it come about that she was sitting there like this? Only two days before she had been everybody's friend. Life had been perpetually gay and exciting. She had had qualms indeed, moments of a quick anguish, before the scene in the 'Spotted Deer.' But there had been always some thought to protect her from herself. John was not coming back for a long, long time. She would replace the money—of course she would! And she would not take any more—or only a very little. Meanwhile the hours floated by, dressed in a colour and variety they had never yet possessed for her—charged with all the delights of wealth, as such a human being under such conditions is able to conceive them.

Her nature, indeed, had never gauged its own capacities for pleasure till within the last few months. Excitement, amusement, society—she had grown to them; they had evoked in her a richer and fuller life, expanded and quickened all the currents of her blood. As she sat shivering in the darkness and solitude, she thought with a sick longing of the hours in the public-

house—the lights, the talk, the warmth within and without. The drink-thirst was upon her at this moment. It had driven her down to the village that afternoon at the moment of John's arrival. But she had no money. She had not dared to unlock the cupboard again, and she could only wander up and down the bit of dark road beyond the 'Spotted Deer,' suffering and craving.

Well, it was all done—all done!

She had come up without her candle, and the only light in the room was a cold glimmer from the snow outside. But she must find a light, for she must write a letter. By much groping she found some matches, and then lit one after another while she searched in her untidy drawers for an ink-bottle and a pen she knew must be there.

She found them, and with infinite difficulty—holding match after match in her left hand—she scrawled a few blotted lines on a torn piece of paper. She was a poor scholar, and the toil was great. When it was done, she propped the paper up against the looking-glass.

Then she felt for her dress, and deliberately put it on again, in the dark, though her hands were so numb with cold that she could scarcely hook the fastenings. Her teeth chattered as she threw her old shawl round her.

Stooping down she took off her boots, and pushing the bolt of her own door back as noiselessly as possible, she crept down the stairs. As she neared the lower door, the sound of two or three loud breathings caught her ear.

Her heart contracted with an awful sense of loneliness. Her husband slept—her children slept—while she——

Then the wave of a strange, a just passion mounted within her. She stepped into the kitchen, and walking up to her husband's chair, she stood still a moment looking at him. The lamp was dying away, but she could still see him plainly. She held herself steadily erect; a frown was on her brow, a flame in her eyes.

'Well, good-bye, Isaac,' she said, in a low but firm voice.

Then she walked to the back door and opened it, taking no heed of noise; the latch fell heavily, the hinges creaked.

'Isaac!' she cried, her tones loud and ringing, '*Isaac!*'

There was a sudden sound in the kitchen. She slipped through the door, and ran along the snow-covered garden.

Isaac, roused by her call from the deep trance of exhaustion

which only a few minutes before had fallen upon his misery, stood up, felt the blast rushing in through the open door at the back, and ran blindly.

The door had swung to again. He clutched it open; in the dim weird light, he saw a dark figure stoop over the well; he heard something flung aside, which fell upon the snow with a thud; then the figure sprang upon the coping of the well.

He ran with all his speed, his face beaten by the wind and sleet. But he was too late. A sharp cry pierced the night. As he reached the well, and hung over it, he heard, or thought he heard, a groan, a beating of the water—then no more.

Isaac's shouts for help attracted the notice of a neighbour who was sitting up with her daughter and a new-born child. She roused her son-in-law and his boy, and through them a score of others, deep night though it was.

Watson was among the first of those who gathered round the well. He and others lowered Isaac with ropes into its icy depths, and drew him up again, while the snow beat upon them all—the straining men—the two dripping shapes emerging from the earth. A murmur of horror greeted the first sight of that marred face on Isaac's arm, as the lanterns fell upon it. For there was a gash above the eye, caused by a projection in the hard chalk side of the well, which of itself spoke death.

Isaac carried her in, and laid her down before the still glowing hearth. A shudder ran through him as he knelt, bending over her. The new wound had effaced all the traces of Timothy's blow. How long was it since she had stood there before him pointing to it?

The features were already rigid. No one felt the smallest hope. Yet, with that futile tenderness all can show to the dead, everything was tried. Mary Anne Waller came—white and speechless—and her deft gentle hands did whatever the village doctor told her. And there were many other women, too, who did their best. Some of them, had Bessie dared to live, would have helped with all their might to fill her cup of punishment to the brim. Now that she had thrown herself on death as her only friend, they were dissolved in pity.

Everything failed. Bessie had meant to die, and she had not missed her aim. There came a moment when the doctor, laying his ear for the last time to her cold breast, raised himself to bid the useless effort cease.

'Send them all away,' he said to the little widow, 'and you stay.' Watson helped to clear the room, then he and Isaac carried the dead woman upstairs. An old man followed them, a bent and broken being, who dragged himself up the steps with his stick. Watson out of compassion came back to help him.

'John—yer'd better go home, an to yer bed—yer can't do no good.'

'I'll wait for Mary Anne,' said John, in a shaking whisper—
'I'll wait for Mary Anne.'

And he stood at the doorway leaning on his stick; his weak and reddened eyes fixed on his cousin, his mouth open feebly.

But Mary Anne, weeping, beckoned to another woman who had come up with the little procession, and they began their last offices.

'Let us go,' said the doctor kindly, his hand on Isaac's shoulder, 'till they have done.'

At that moment Watson, throwing a last professional glance round the room, perceived the piece of torn paper propped against the glass. Ah! there was the letter. There was always a letter.

He walked forward, glanced at it, and handed it to Isaac. Isaac drew his hand across his brow in bewilderment, then seemed to recognise the handwriting and thrust it into his pocket without a word. Watson touched his arm. 'Don't you destroy it,' he said in warning; 'it'll be asked for at the inquest.'

The men descended. Watson and the doctor departed. John and Isaac were left alone in the kitchen. Isaac hung over the fire, which had been piled up in the hope of restoring warmth to the drowned woman. Suddenly he took out the letter and, bending his head to the blaze, began to read it.

'Isaac, yer a cruel husband to me, an there's no way fer me but the way I'm goin. I didn't mean no 'arm, not at first, but there, wot's the good of talkin. I can't bear the way as you speaks to me an looks at me, an I'll never go to prison—no, never. It's awful—fer the children ull 'ave no mother, an I don't know how-
ever Arthur ull manage. But yer woodent shew me no mercy, an I can't think of anythin different. I did love yer an the childer, but the drink got holt of me. Yer mus see as Arthur is rapped up, an Edie's eyes ull 'ave to be seen to now an agen. I'm sorry, but there's nothin else. I wud like yer to kiss me onst, when they bring me in, and jes say, Bessie, I forgive yer. It woudn't do yer no 'arm, an p'raps I may 'ear it without your knowin. So good-bye Isaac, from yur lovin wife, Bessie. . . .'

As he read it, the man's fixed pallor and iron calm gave way. He leant against the mantelpiece, shaken at last with the sobs of a human and a helpless remorse.

John, from his seat on the settle a few yards away, looked at Isaac miserably. His lips opened now and then as though to speak, then closed again. His brain could form no distinct image. He was encompassed by a general sense of desolation, springing from the loss of his money, which was pierced every now and then by a strange sense of guilt. It seemed to have something to do with Bessie, this last, though what he could not have told.

So they sat, till Mary Anne's voice called 'Isaac' from the top of the stairs.

Isaac stood up, drew one deep breath, controlled himself, and went, John following.

Mary Anne held the bedroom door open for them, and the two men entered, treading softly.

The women stood on either hand crying. They had clothed the dead in white and crossed her hands upon her breast. A linen covering had been passed, nun-like, round the head and chin. The wound was hidden, and the face lay framed in an oval of pure white, which gave it a strange severity.

Isaac bent over her. Was this *Bessie*—Bessie, the human, faulty, chattering creature—whom he, her natural master, had been free to scold or caress at will? At bottom he had always been conscious in regard to her of a silent but immeasurable superiority, whether as mere man to mere woman, or as the Christian to the sinner.

Now—he dared scarcely touch her. As she lay in this new-found dignity, the proud peace of her look intimidated, accused him—would always accuse him till he too rested as she rested now, clad for the end. Yet she had bid him kiss her—and he obeyed her—groaning within himself, incapable altogether, out of sheer abasement, of saying those words she had asked of him.

Then he sat down beside her, motionless. John tried once or twice to speak to him, but Isaac shook his head impatiently. At last the mere presence of Bolderfield in the room seemed to anger him. He threw the old man such dark and restless looks that Mary Anne perceived them, and, with instinctive understanding, persuaded John to go.

She, however, must needs go with him, and she went. The

other woman stayed. Every now and then she looked furtively at Isaac.

'If some one don't look arter 'im,' she said to herself, 'ee'll go as his father and his brothers went afore him. 'Ee's got the look on it awready. Whenever it's light I'll go fetch Muster Drew.'

With the first rays of the morning Bolderfield got up from the bed in Mary Anne's cottage, where she had placed him a couple of hours before, imploring him to lie still and rest himself. He slipped on his coat, the only garment he had taken off, and taking his stick he crept down to the cottage door. Mary Anne, who had gone out to fetch some bread, had left it ajar. He opened it and stood on the threshold looking out.

The storm of the night was over, and already a milder breeze was beginning to melt the newly fallen snow. The sun was striking cheerfully from the hill behind him upon the glistening surfaces of the distant fields; the old labourer felt a hint of spring in the air. It brought with it a hundred vague associations, and filled him with a boundless despair. What would become of him now—penniless and old and feeble? The horror of Bessie's death no longer stood between him and his own pain, and would soon even cease to protect her from his hatred.

Mary Anne came back along the lane, carrying a jug and a loaf. Her little face was all blanched and drawn with weariness; yet when she saw him her look kindled. She ran up to him.

'What did yer come down for, John? I'd ha taken yer yer breakfast in yer bed.'

He looked at her, then at the food. His eyes filled with tears.

'I can't pay yer for it,' he said, pointing with his stick; 'I can't pay yer for it.'

Mary Anne led him in, scolding and coaxing him with her gentle trembling voice. She made him sit down while she blew up the fire; she fed and tended him. When she had forced him to eat something, she came behind him and laid her hand on his shoulder.

'John,' she said, clearing her throat, 'John, yer shan't want while I'm livin. I promised Eliza I wouldn't forget yer, and I want. I can work yet—there's plenty o' people want me to work for 'em—an maybe, when yer get over this, you'll work a bit too now and again. We'll hold together, John—anyways. While I live and keep my 'elth yer shan't want. An yer'll forgive

Bessie'—she broke into sudden sobbing. 'Oh! I'll never 'ear a crule word about Bessie in my 'ouse, *never!*'

John put his arms on the table and hid his face upon them. He could not speak of forgiveness, nor could he thank her for her promise. His chief feeling was an intense wish to sleep; but as Mary Anne dried her tears and began to go about her household work, the sound of her step, the sense of her loving presence near him, began for the first time to relax the aching grip upon his heart. He had always been weak and dependent, in spite of his thrift and his money. He would be far more weak and dependent now and henceforward. But again, he had found a woman's tenderness to lean upon, and as she ministered to him—this humble shrinking creature he had once so cordially despised—the first drop of balm fell upon his sore.

Meanwhile, in another cottage a few yards away, Mr. Drew was wrestling with Isaac. In his own opinion, he met with small success. The man who had refused his wife mercy, shrank with a kind of horror from talking of the Divine mercy. Isaac Costrell's was a strange and groping soul. But those misjudged him who called him a hypocrite.

Yet in truth, during the years that followed, whenever he was not under the influence of recurrent attacks of melancholia, Isaac did again derive much comfort from the aspirations and self-abasements of religion. No human life would be possible if there were not forces in and round man perpetually tending to repair the wounds and breaches that he himself makes. Misery provokes pity; despair throws itself on a Divine tenderness. And for those who have the 'grace' of faith, in the broken and imperfect action of these healing powers upon this various world—in the love of the merciful for the unhappy, in the tremulous yet undying hope that pierces even sin and remorse with the vision of some ultimate salvation from the self that breeds them—in these powers there speaks the only voice which can make us patient under the tragedies of human fate, whether these tragedies be 'the falls of princes' or such meaner, narrower pains as brought poor Bessie Costrell to her end.

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

AUGUST 1895.

*CLEG KELLY, ARAB OF THE CITY:
HIS PROGRESS AND ADVENTURES.¹*

BY S. R. CROCKETT,
AUTHOR OF 'THE STICKIT MINISTER,' 'THE RAIDERS,' ETC.

ADVENTURE VII.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE COCKROACHES.

ONE day Cleg Kelly became paper-boy at the shop of Mistress Roy, at the top corner of Meggat's Close. And he wanted you to know this. He was no longer as the paper-boys who lag about the Waverley, waiting for stray luggage left on the platforms, nor even as this match-boy. He was in a situation.

His hours were from half-past six in the morning to half-past six in the morning, when he began again. His wages were three shillings a week—and his chance. But he was quite contented, for he could contrive his own amenities by the way. His father had been in a bad temper ever since he lost his tools, and so Cleg did not go home often.

This was the way in which he got his situation and became a member of the established order of things, indeed, the next thing to a voter. There had been a cheap prepaid advertisement in the 'Evening Scrapbook' which ran as follows:—

'WANTED, an active and intelligent message-boy, able to read and write. Must be well recommended as a Christian boy of good and willing disposition. Wages not large, but will be treated as one of the family.—Apply No. 2,301, "Scrapbook" Office.'

¹ Copyright 1895 in the United States of America by D. Appleton & Co.
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Now Miss Cecilia Tennant thought this a most interesting and encouraging advertisement. She had been for a long time on the look-out for a situation to suit Cleg. The Junior Partner indeed could have been induced to find a place for Cleg in 'The Works,' but it was judged better that the transition from the freedom of the streets to the lettered ease of an office desk should be made gradually. So Celie Tennant went after this situation for Cleg in person.

The arrangement with Mistress Roy in the Pleasance was a little difficult to make, but Celie made it. She went down one clammy evening, when the streets were covered with a greasy slime, and the pavements reflected the gloomy sky. In the grey lamp-sprinkled twilight she reached the paper-shop. There were sheafs of papers and journals hung up on the cheeks of the door. Coarsely coloured valentines hung in the window, chiefly rude portraitures of enormously fat women with frying-pans, and of red-nosed policemen with batons to correspond.

Celie Tennant entered. There was a heavy smell of moist tobacco all about. The floor of the little shop was strewn with newspapers, apparently of ancient date, certainly of ancient dirt. These rustled and moved of themselves in a curious way, as though they had untimely come alive. As indeed they had done, for the stir was caused by the cockroaches arranging their domestic affairs underneath. Celie lifted her nose a little and her skirts a good deal. It took more courage to stand still and hear that faint rustling than to face the worst bully of Brannigan's gang in the Sooth Back. She rapped briskly on the counter.

A man came shuffling out of the room in the rear. He was clad in rusty black, and had a short clay pipe in his mouth. His eyes were narrow and foxy, and he looked unwholesomely scaly—as if he had been soaked in strong brine for half a year, but had forgotten either to finish the process, or to remove the traces of the incomplete pickling.

'Servant, m'am!' said he, putting his pipe behind him as he came into the shop.

'I was referred here—to this address—from the office of the "Evening Scrapbook,"' said Celie, with great dignity, standing on her tiptoes among the papers. 'I called about the situation of message-boy you advertised for.'

'Ye wasna thinkin' o' applyin' yersel'!' said the man, with a weak jocularly. 'For my ain part I hae nae objections to a snod bit lass, but the mistress michtna like it.'

Miss Cecilia Tennant looked at him in a way that would have frozen a younger man, but the frowsy object from the back shop only smirked and laughed. With care, the jest would serve him a week. He made up his mind to whom he would tell it when the lady was gone.

'I wish to recommend one of the boys from my class for the position. His name is Charles Kelly. He is a smart boy of thirteen, and he is anxious to get good and steady work. What are the wages you offer?'

The man looked cunningly all about the shop. He craned his neck over the counter and looked up the street. He had a long-jointed body, and a neck that shut up and pulled out like a three-draw telescope. Celie Tennant shrank instinctively when the man protruded his head past her in this curious manner, as she might have shrunk from some loathly animal.

Then, having resumed his normal slouch behind the counter, he looked at his visitant and said, 'The wage is half a croon a week, and his chance o' the drawer—the same as mysel'.'

'His chance of the drawer!' said Celie, not understanding.

'When *she's* oot,' the man continued, laying his finger against the side of his nose and winking with meaning and expression at his visitor. The expression of disgust at the corner of Miss Tennant's nose threatened to result in a permanent tilt, which might have been unbecoming, and which certainly must have frightened the Junior Partner.

'When *she's* oot,' repeated the frowsy one, confidentially, 'your friend is welcome to his chance o' the drawer—if,' he added, with infinite caution, 'she was to leave it unlocked, which she seldom does. It's lock'd the noo! See!' And he shook a greasy knob under the counter till the drawer rattled against the bolt of the lock. 'Oh, it's just like her! She aye does that when she gangs oot. She's an awsome near woman! She has nae confidence, nae open-hearted leeborality, sic' as a wife ought to hae wi' the husband of her bosom.'

'Do you want a message-boy, or do you not?' said Celie, who felt that in the interests of Cleg she would face a battery of artillery, but who really could not stand the rustling among the papers on the floor very much longer.

'Certain she do that!' said the man, 'an active boy, an intelligent boy, a Christian boy—half a croon a week—and his chance o' the drawer.'

Once more he protruded his head in that monstrously serpentine manner round the corner of the low shop-door. But this time he retracted it quick as lightning, and shuffled back into the room behind. Celie heard him throw himself on a chair, which groaned under him.

'I'm sleepin' noo,' he said, 'sleepin' soond. Dinna say that I ever spoke till ye, for I'll deny it if ye do!' he said.

Cecilia Tennant stood her ground bravely, though the newspapers on the floor rustled continuously. She wondered why the path of duty was such a cockroachy one. A moment afterwards a grim-looking, hard-faced woman entered. She was a tall woman, with a hooked nose and broad masculine face. The eyes were at once fierce and suspicious. She marched straight round the counter, lifting the little flap at the back and letting it fall with a bang. The cat was sitting on the end of the counter nearest the door of the inner room. The woman took her hand and swept it from the counter, as though she had merely knocked off a little dust. The cat went into the inner room like a projectile.

Then, having entrenched herself at the back of the counter, the fierce-eyed woman turned sharp round and faced Celie Tennant.

'Well?' she said, with a certain defiance in her tone such as women only use to one another, which was at once depreciatory and pitiful. The Junior Partner would have turned and fled, but Celie Tennant was afraid of no woman that walked.

'I came,' she said, clearly and coldly, 'to ask about the situation of message-boy for one of my Mission lads. I was sent here from the office of the newspaper. Has the situation been filled?'

'What is the boy's name?' asked the woman, twitching the level single line of her black brows at her visitor.

'His name is Charles Kelly.'

'Son o' Tim Kelly that leeves in the Brickfield?' asked the woman quickly.

'I believe that is his father's name,' said Celie, giving glance for glance.

'Then we dinna want the likes o' him here!' said the woman, half turning on her heel with a certain dark contempt.

'But my name is Cecilia Tennant of Glenleven Road, and I am quite willing to give security for the boy—to a reasonable amount, that is——' continued Celie, who had a practical mind and much miniature dignity.

'Will ye leave the money?' asked the woman, as if a thought struck her.

'Certainly not,' replied Celie, 'but I will write you a line stating that I hold myself responsible for anything he is proved guilty of stealing, to the extent of ten pounds.'

It was thus that Cleg Kelly became newsboy and general assistant to Mistress Roy and her husband at Roy's corner.

As Celie went out, she heard Mr. Roy stretching himself and yawning, as though awakening out of a deep sleep.

'Wha's that ye hae had in?' he inquired pleasantly.

'What business is that o' yours, ye muckle slabber?' returned his wife with instant aggression.

And the cockroaches continue to rustle all the time beneath the carpet of old newspapers.

ADVENTURE VIII.

THE FLIGHT OF SHEEMUS.

NEXT morning Cleg Kelly entered upon his duties. He carried orders to the various publishing offices for about two hundred papers in all. He had often been there before upon his own account, so that the crowd and the rough jocularities were not new to him. But now he practised a kind of austere, aristocratic hauteur. He was not any longer a prowler on the streets, with only a stance for which he might have to fight. He was a newsvendor's assistant. He would not even accept a wager of battle upon provocation offered. He could, however, still kick; and as he had an admirable pair of boots with tackety soles an inch thick to do it with, he soon made himself the most respected boy in the crowd.

On returning to the Pleasance, he was admitted through the chink of the door by Mistress Roy, who was comprehensively dressed in a vast yellow flannel bed-gown, which grew murkier and murkier towards her feet. Her hair was tumbling about her eyes. That, too, was of a yellow grey, as though part of the bed-gown had been unravelled out and attached loosely to her head. Feathers and woolly dust were stuck impartially over hair and bed-gown.

'Write the names on the papers as I cry them,' she said to Cleg, 'and look slippy.'

Cleg was quick to obey. He had, in fact, his pencil ready.

'Cready, number seventeen—three stairs back. Dinna write a' that. Write the name, an' mind the rest,' said Mistress Roy.

'MacVane, twenty-wan, shop,' and so on went the list interminably.

Mistress Roy kept no books, but in her memory she had the various counts and reckonings of all grades of her customers. She retained there, for instance, the exact amounts of the intricate scores of the boys who took in the 'Boys of the City.' She knew who had not paid for the last chapter of 'Ned Kelly; or, the Iron-clad Australian Bushranger.' She had a mental gauge on the great roll of black twist tobacco which lay on the counter among old 'Evening Scraps.' She knew exactly how much there was in the casks of strong waters under the stairs, from which, every Sunday, her numerous friends and callers were largely entertained.

When Cleg went out to deliver his papers he had nearly a hundred calls to make. But such was his sense of locality and his knowledge of the district that, with the help of a butcher's boy of his acquaintance (to whom he promised a reading of the 'Desperadoes of New Orleans; or, the Good Ku Klux'), he managed to deliver all—except a single 'Scotsman' to one Mackimmon, who lived in a big land at the corner of Rankeillor Street. Him he was utterly unable to discover.

Upon his return Mistress Roy was waiting for him.

'Did ye deliver them a'?' she asked, bending forward her head in a threatening manner as if expecting a negative reply.

'A' but yin!' said Cleg, who was in good spirits, and pleased with himself.

His mistress took up a brush. Cleg's hand dropped lightly upon a pound weight. He did not mean to play the abused little message-boy if he knew it.

'And what yin might that be?' said Mistress Roy.

'Mackimmon,' said the boy briefly, 'he's no in Rankeillor Street ava'.'

The hand that held the brush went back in act to throw. Now this was, from the point of view of psychological dynamics, a mistake in tactics. A woman should never attempt to throw anything in controversy, least of all a brush. Her stronghold is to advance to the charge with all her natural weapons and vigour. But to throw a brush is to abdicate her providential advantages. And so Mistress Roy found.

A straight line is the shortest distance between two points, and that was the course described by the pound weight on which Cleg Kelly dropped his hand. It sped fair and level from his

hand, flung low as he had many a time skimmed stones on Saint Margaret's Loch in the hollow under the Crag.

'Ouch!' said suddenly Mistress Roy, taken, as she herself said, 'in the short of the wind.' The hearth-brush with which she had been wont to correct her former message boys fell helplessly to the ground.

'Fetch me a toothfu' frae the back o' the door. Oh, ye villain, Cleg Kelly! I'm a' overcome like!' she said.

Cleg went to the back of the door where there was a keg with a spigot. He brought his mistress a drink in a little tinnikin.

She seemed to have forgotten to be angry, and bent her brows upon him more pleasantly than she had yet done.

'I thoct that ye were a religious boy,' she said.

Cleg stood back a little with Mackimmon's paper still in his hand.

'Pund wecht for besom shank is good religion,' said the imperfect Christian but excellent message-boy.

'Gang and deliver that paper!' Mistress Roy commanded, again looking up.

'I want my breakfast,' said Cleg, with an air of sullen determination.

His mistress looked at him a moment, still sitting with the tinnikin of undutied whisky in her hand, and occasionally taking a sip. Cleg eyed her level-fronted.

She gave in all at once.

'Tak' the knife and help yoursel,' she said, pointing to a loaf and a piece of yellow cheese.

She went into a back room.

'Get up, Jock,' she said, giving the clothes a jerk over the foot of the bed, and seizing a water can. Her husband rose to his feet on the floor without a word. Thus was business begun in Mistress Roy's paper-shop on the Pleasance.

And so that day went on, the first of many. When Celie Tennant asked Cleg how he was getting on, he said, as the manner of his kind is, 'Fine!' And no word more could she get out of him. For Cleg was not a boy to complain. His father, Timothy Kelly, was safely in gaol, and that was enough to give Cleg an interest in life. Moreover, he could save some of his three shillings a week to give to Vara Kavannah to help her with the children.

He had not as yet taken advantage of the 'chance of the

drawer' offered by Mr. Roy. But, on the other hand, he had stuck out for three shillings and his keep.

Also, as the advertisements which he read every day in the papers said, he meant to see that he got it.

Vara Kavannah was a friend of Cleg's. She lived with her mother in a poor room in the Tinklers' Lands, and tried to do her duty by her little baby brother Gavin and her younger brother Hugh. Her mother was a friend of Mr. Timothy Kelly's, and there is no more to be said. The only happy time for all of them was when both Mr. Kelly, senior, and Sal Kavannah were provided for in the gaol on the Calton. But this did not happen often at one time. When it did, Cleg went up the long stairs and told Vara. Then they started and took the baby and Hugh for a long walk in the Queen's Park. Cleg carried the baby. The boys of his own age did not mock him to his face for doing this. The Drabble had done it once, and severely regretted it for several days, during which time his face conveyed a moral lesson to all beholders.

It was also a happy time for Vara Kavannah when her mother was safely locked up on a long sentence, or when for some weeks she disappeared from the city. Her father, a kindly, weak man, stood the dog's life his wife led him as long as possible.

Sheemus Kavannah was a poet. The heart was in him which tells men that the world is wide and fair. He had endured his wife in the bitterness of his heart, till late one evening he rose, and with his wife lying on the floor, a log, he awaked his little lass. There were tears streaming down his cheeks. His daughter started from her bed with all her hair about her. She was used to sudden and painful awakenings.

'Vara,' he said, speaking in Irish, 'daughter of Sheemus, Vara Kavannah, hark to me. Mavourneen, my heart is broke with your mother. It's no good at all to stay. I am going to Liverpool for work, and when I get it I shall come back and take you away—you Vara, and Hugh and little Gavin. Lonely shall my road be and far. But I shall return, I shall return!'

Now Vara, being bred where they spoke not the tongue of the old country, understood nothing but the last words, 'I shall return, I shall return!'

So it was in this way that Cleg Kelly became father and mother to the little company of three in the Tinklers' Lands.

As he went on the way of his duty, he found out some things about the business capacity of Mistress Roy that would have

astonished the police. He had, in the impetuous ardour of youth, cleared away the accumulated papers on the floor, and raided the swarming cockroaches.

'Hullo, mother, what's the matter here?' cried one of the customers of the place, coming to Mistress Roy, who sat in the little den at the back.

'Naething,' said that lady. 'It's only that daft laddie. He disna think I gie him aneuch to do, so he's ta'en to finding wark for himsel'.'

The customer, a burly, clean-shaven man, took a long look at Cleg.

'Tim Kelly's kid,' said the woman, by way of explanation.

The man whistled—a long mellow whistle—with an odd turn at the end.

'No,' said Mistress Roy, shaking her head, 'the lad's square. And what's mair, I'm no gaun to hae him meddled. He's the first boy that ever took oot the papers without cheatin'.' A good character is a valuable asset, even in a shebeen.

ADVENTURE IX.

THE WARMING OF THE DRABBLE.

THE Kavannahs lived in the Tinklers' Lands at the foot of Davie Dean's Street. That was where Sheemus Kavannah left them when he went to Liverpool to seek work. Originally they had lived on the second floor of this great rabbit-warren of a land, but now they had sunk till they occupied one room of the cellar. Their sole light came from an iron grating let into the pavement.

The Kavannahs had no furniture. It was just possible for Vara to get some little things together during the periods when her mother was under the care of the authorities. But as soon as Sal Kavannah came out, everything that would sell or pawn was instantly dissolved into whisky.

At all times it was a sore battle in the Tinklers' Lands, for these were the days before city improvements. In his wildest days Cleg Kelly had always befriended the Kavannahs, and he had been as much Vara's friend on the sly as a boy could be who valued the good opinion of his companions. But when Cleg grew stronger in his muscles and less amenable to public opinion, he

publicly announced that he would 'warm' any boy who said a word to him about the Kavannahs.

One day he heard that Archie Drabble had kicked over the Kavannahs' family bed, and left it lying, when Vara was out getting some things for the children. Cleg started out to look up the Drabble. He had formerly had an interview with that gentleman, which has been chronicled elsewhere.¹ Cleg Kelly was on the way to reformation now, so would not kick him. But as a faithful friend he would 'warm' him for his soul's good. Cleg did not mind doing this. It was a congenial sphere of Christian work.

The Drabble was found trying to steal collars off a clothes-line at the back of Arthur Street. Cleg Kelly had no objections to this feat. He was not a policeman, and if the Drabble wished to get into the lock-up, it was not his business. But first of all he must settle the matter of the Kavannahs' bed. After that the Drabble, an it liked him, might steal all the collars in the Pleasance.

'Drabble,' cried Cleg, 'come here, I want ye!'

'Want away,' cried the Drabble, 'gang and say yer prayers!'

This was intended for an insult, and so Cleg took it.

'Ye had better say yours!' he retorted. 'When I catch you it'll no be ordinar' prayers that will help you!'

Cleg had a disbelief in the efficacy of the prayers of the wicked which was thoroughly orthodox. The Drabble was of the wicked. Once he had thrown mud at a Sunday School teacher. Cleg only threw snow, as soft as he could get it.

There was a wall between Cleg and the Drabble, a wall with a place for your toes. With his boots off Cleg could have shinned up like a cat. But three-shilling boots with toe caps are tender things and need to be treated with respect. Whereupon Cleg had resort to guile.

'Hae ye seen the last number o' "Gory Dick, the Desprader of the Prairies," Drabble?' cried Cleg over the wall.

'Gae 'way, man, an' eat sawdust, you paper boy!' cried the Drabble over the wall.

The Drabble was of the more noble caste of the sneak thief. He had still his eye on the collars. Cleg raged impotently. All his Irishry boiled within him.

'Be the powers, Archie Drabble, wait till I catch ye. I'll not leave a leevin' creature on ye from head to fut!'

The completeness of this threat might have intimidated the

¹ *The Stickit Minister*, 10th edition, p. 153.

Drabble, but he was on the safe side of the wall, and only laughed. He had a vast contempt for Cleg, inasmuch as he had forsaken the good and distinguished ways of Timothy Kelly, his father, and taken to Missions and Sunday Schools. Cleg foamed in helpless fury at the foot of the wall. He grew to hate his boots and his mended clothes, in his great desire to get at the Drabble. To the original sin with regard to the bed of the Kavannahs, the Drabble had now added many actual transgressions. Cleg was the vindicator of justice, and he mentally arranged to a nicety where and how he would punch the Drabble.

But just then the Drabble came over the wall at a run. He had been spotted from a distance by an active young officer, Constable Gilchrist, who was noted for his zeal in providing for the youth of the south side. The Drabble dropped to the ground like a cat, with the drawn pale face and furtive eyes which told Cleg that the 'poliss' were after him.

Without doubt Cleg ought to have given the offender up to justice, as a matter of private duty. He might thus have settled his own private matters with the pursued. But the traditional instincts of the outlaw held. And, seeing the double look which the Drabble turned up and down the street, he said softly—

'Here, Drabble; help me to deliver thae papers.'

The Drabble glanced at Cleg to make out if he meant to sell him to justice. That was indeed almost an impossibility. But the Drabble did not know how far the evil communications of Sunday Schools might have corrupted the original good manners of the Captain of the Sooth-Back Gang.

However, there was that in Cleg's face which gave him confidence. The Drabble grabbed the papers and was found busily delivering them up one side of the street while Cleg Kelly took the other, when Constable Gilchrist, reinforced by a friend, came in sight over the wall by the aid of a clothes-prop and the nicks in the stones.

Now the peaceful occupation of delivering evening newspapers is not a breach of the peace nor yet a contravention of the city bylaws. Constable Gilchrist was disappointed. He was certain that he had seen that boy 'loitering with intent'; but here he was peacefully pursuing a lawful avocation. The Drabble had a reason, or at least an excuse, for being on the spot. So the chase was in vain, and Constable Gilchrist knew it. But his companion was not so easily put off the scent.

'Cleg Kelly,' he cried, 'I see you; hae you a care, my son, or you'll end up alongside of your father.'

'Thank ye, sir,' said Cleg Kelly. 'Buy a *News*, sir?'

'Be off, you impudent young shaver!' cried the sergeant, laughing.

And Cleg went off.

'That's a smart boy, and doing well,' said Constable Gilchrist.

'Decent enough,' returned the sergeant, 'but he's in a bad shop at Roy's, and he'll get no good from that Drabble loon!'

And this was a truth. But at that moment, at the back of the Tinklers' Lands, the Drabble was getting much good from Cleg Kelly. Cleg had off his coat and the Drabble was being 'warmed.'

'That'll learn ye to touch the Kavannahs' bed!' cried Cleg.

And the Drabble sat down.

'That's for miscaain' my faither!'

The Drabble sat down again at full length.

'That's for tellin' me to say my prayers! I learn you to meddle wi' my prayers!'

Thus Cleg upheld the Conscience Clause.

But the Drabble soon had enough. He warded Cleg off with a knee and elbow, and stated what he would do when he met him again on a future unnamed occasion.

He would tell his big brother, so he would, and his big brother would smash the face of all the Kellys that ever breathed.

Cleg was not to be outdone.

'I'll tell *my* big brother o' you, Drabble. He can fecht ten polissmen, and he could dicht the street wi' your brither, and throw him ower a lamp-post to dry.'

Cleg and the Drabble felt that they must do something for the honour of their respective houses, for this sort of family pride is a noble thing and much practised in genealogies.

So, pausing every ten yards to state what their several big brothers would do, and with the fellest intentions as to future breaches of the peace, the combatants parted. The afternoon air bore to the Drabble from the next street—

'*You—let—the Kavannahs—alane frae this oot—or it'll be the waur for you!*'

The Drabble rubbed his nose on his sleeve, and thought that on the whole it might be so.

Then he took out three papers which he had secreted up his

sleeve, and went joyfully and sold them. The Drabble was a boy of resource. Cleg had to come good for these papers to Mistress Roy, and also bear her tongue for having lost them. She stopped them out of his wages. Then Cleg's language became as bad as that of an angry Sunday School superintendent. The wise men say that the Scots dialect is only Early English. Cleg's was that kind, but debased by an admixture of Later Decorated.

He merely stated what he meant to do to the Drabble when he met him again. But the statement entered so much into unnecessary detail that there is no need to record it fully.

ADVENTURE X.

THE SQUARING OF THE POLICE.

CLEG was free and barefoot. His father was 'in' for twelve months. Also it was the summer season, and soft was the sun. The schools were shut—not that it mattered much as to that, for secular education was not much in Cleg's way, compulsory attendance being not as yet great in the land. Cleg had been spending the morning rooting on railings and 'laying for softies'—by which he meant conversing with boys in nice clean jackets, with nice clean manners, whose methods of war and whose habit of speech were not Cleg's.

Cleg had recently entered upon a new contract with the mistress of Roy's paper shop. He was now 'outdoor boy' instead of 'indoor boy,' and he was glad of it. He had also taken new lodgings. For when the police took his father to prison, to the son's great relief and delight, the landlord of the little room by the brickfield had cast the few sticks of furniture and the mattress into the street, and, as he said, 'made a complete clearance of the rubbish.' He included Cleg.

But it was not so easy to get rid of Cleg, for the boy had his private boards in every crevice and behind every rafter. So that very night, with the root of a candle which he borrowed from a cellar window to which he had access (owing to his size and agility), he went back and ransacked his late home. He prised up the boards of the floor. He tore aside the laths where the plaster had given way. He removed the plaster itself with a tenpenny nail where it had been recently mended. He tore down the entire series of accumulated papers from the ceiling, disturbing myriads of insects

both active and sluggish which do not need to be further particularised.

'I'll learn auld Skinflint to turn my faither's property oot on the street,' said Cleg, his national instinct against eviction coming strongly upon him. 'I'll wager I can make this place so that the man what built it winna ken it the morn's morning!'

And he kept his word. When Nathan, the Jew pawnbroker and cheap jeweller, came with his men to do a little cleaning up, the scene which struck them on entering, as a stone strikes the face, was, as the reporters say, simply appalling. The first step Mr. Nathan took brought down the ceiling-dust and its inhabitants in showers. The next took him, so far as his legs were concerned, into the floor beneath, for he had stepped through a hole, in which Cleg had discovered a rich deposit of silver spoons marked with an entire alphabet of initials.

The police inspector was summoned, and he, in his turn, stood in amaze at the destruction.

'It's that gaol-bird, young Kelly!' cried Nathan, dancing and chirruping in his inarticulate wrath. 'I'll have him lagged for it—sure as I live.'

'Aye?' said the inspector, gravely. He had his own reasons for believing that Mr. Nathan would do nothing of the sort. 'Meantime, I have a friend who will be interested in this place.'

And straightway he went down and brought him. The friend was the Chief Sanitary Inspector, a medical man of much emphasis of manner and abruptness of utterance.

'What's this? What's this? Clear out the whole damnable pig-hole! What d'ye mean, Jackson, by having such a sty as this in your district? Clean it out! Tear it down! It's like having seven bulls of Bashan in one stable. Never saw such a hog's mess in my life. Clear it out! Clear it out!'

The miserable Nathan wrung his hands, and hopped about like a hen.

'Oh, Doctor Christopher, I shall have it put in beautiful order—beautiful order. Everything shall be done in the besht style, I do assure you—'

'Best style, stuff and nonsense! Tear it down—gut it out—take it all away and bury it. I'll send men to-morrow morning!' cried the doctor, decidedly.

And Dr. Christopher departed at a dog-trot to investigate a misbehaving trap in a drain at Coltbridge.

The police inspector laughed.

'Are you still in a mind to prosecute young Kelly, Mr. Nathan?' he said.

But the grief and terror of the pawnbroker were beyond words. He sat down on the narrow stair, and laid his head between his hands.

'I shall be ruined—ruined! I took the place for a debt. I never got a penny of rent for it, and now to be made to spend money upon it——'

The police inspector touched him on the shoulder.

'If I were you, Nathan,' he said, 'I should get this put in order. If it is true that you got no rent for this place, the melting-pot in your back cellar got plenty.'

'It's a lie—a lie!' cried the little man, getting up as if stung. 'It was never proved. I got off!'

'Aye,' said the inspector, 'ye got off? But though "Not proven" clears a man o' the Calton gaol, it keeps him on our books.'

'Yes, yes,' said the little Jew, clapping his hands as if he were summoning slaves in the Arabian Nights, 'it shall be done. I shall attend to it at once.'

And the inspector went out into the street, laughing so heartily within him that more than once something like the shadow of a grin crossed the stern official face which covered so much kindness from the ken of the world.

The truth of the matter was that Cleg Kelly had squared the police. It is a strange thing to say, for the force of the city is composed of men staunchly incorruptible. I have tried it myself and know. The Edinburgh police has been honourably distinguished first by an ambition to prevent crime, to catch the criminal next, and, lastly, to care for the miserable women and children whom nearly every criminal drags to infamy in his wake.

Yet with all these honourable titles to distinction, upon this occasion the police had certainly been squared, and that by Cleg Kelly. And in this wise.

When Cleg had finished his search through the receptacles of his father and his own hidie-holes, he found himself in possession of as curious a collection of miscellaneous curiosities as might stock a country museum or set a dealer in old junk up in business. There were many spoons of silver, and a few of Britannia metal which his father had brought away in mistake, or because he was pressed for time and hated to give trouble. There were forks

whole, and forks broken at the handle where the initials ought to have come, teapots with the leaves still within them, the toddy bowl of a city magnate—with an inscription setting forth that it had been presented to Bailie Porter for twenty years of efficient service in the department of cleaning and lighting, and also in recognition of his uniform courtesy and abundant hospitality. There were also delicate ormolu clocks and nearly a score of watches, portly verge, slim Geneva, and bluff serviceable English lever.

Cleg brought one of his mother's wicker clothes-baskets which had been tossed out on the street by Mr. Nathan's men the day before, and, putting a rich Indian shawl in the bottom to stop the crevices, he put into it all the spoil, except such items as belonged strictly to himself, and with which the nimble fingers of his father had had no connection.

Such were the top half of a brass candlestick, which he had himself found in an ash-bucket on the street. He remembered the exact 'bucket.' It was in front of old Kermack, the baker's, and he had had to fight a big dog to get possession, because the brass at the top being covered with the grease, the dog considered the candlestick a desirable article of *vertu*. There was a soap-box, for which he had once fought a battle; the basin he used for dragging about by a string on the pavement, with hideous outcries, whenever the devil within made it necessary for him to produce the most penetrating and objectionable noise he could think of. There was (his most valuable possession) a bright brass harness rein-holder, for which the keeper of a livery stable had offered him five shillings if he would bring the pair, or sixpence for the single one—an offer which Cleg had declined, but which had made him ever after cherish the rein-holder as worth more than all the jewellers' shops on Princes Street.

These and other possessions to which his title was incontrovertible he laid aside for conveyance to his new home, an old construction hut which now lay neglected in a builder's yard near the St. Leonards Station.

All the other things Cleg took straight over to the police-office near the brickfield, where his friend, the sergeant's wife, held up her hands at sight of them. Nor did she call her husband till she had been assured that Cleg had had personally nothing to do with the collection of them.

When the sergeant came in his face changed and his eyes glittered, for here was stolen property in abundance, of which the

Chief—that admirable gentleman of the quiet manners and the limitless memory—had long ago given up all hope.

‘Ah! if only the young rascal had brought us these things before Tim’s trial, I would have got him twenty years!’ said the Chief.

But though Cleg Kelly hated and despised his father, his hatred did not quite go that length. He did not love the police for their own sake, though he was friendly enough with many of the individual officers, and, in especial, with the sergeant’s wife, who gave him ‘pieces’ in memory of his mother, and, being a woman, also perhaps a little in memory of what his father had once seemed to her.

Cleg did not stay to be asked many questions as to how he came into possession of so many valuables. He had found them, he said; but he could not be induced to condescend upon the particulars of the discovery.

So the sergeant was forced to be content. But ever after this affair it was quite evident that Cleg was a privileged person, and did not come within Mr. Nathan’s power of accusation. So it was manifest that Cleg Kelly had corrupted the incorruptible, and crowned his exploits by squaring the metropolitan police.

ADVENTURE XI.

THE BOY IN THE WOODEN HUT.

THE wooden hut where Cleg had taken up his abode was on the property of a former landlord, who in his time had tired of Tim Kelly as a tenant, and had insisted upon his removal, getting his office safe broken into in consequence. But Mr. Callendar had never been unkind to Isabel and Cleg. So the boy had kindly memories of the builder, and especially he remembered the smell of the pine shavings as Callendar’s men planed deal boards to grain for mahogany. The scent struck Cleg as the cleanest thing he had ever smelled in his life.

So, with the help of an apprentice joiner, he set up the old construction hut, which, having been used many years ago in the making of the new coal sidings at the St. Leonards Station, had been thrown aside at the end of the job, and never broken up.

The builder saw Cleg flitting hither and thither about the

yard, but, being accustomed to such visitors, he took no great notice of the boy, till one day, poking about among some loose rubbish and boards at the back of his yard, he happened to glance at the old hut. Great was his astonishment to see it set on its end, a window frame too large for the aperture secured on the outside with large nails driven in at the corners, a little fringe of soil scraped roughly about it as if a brood of chickens had worked their way round the hut, and a few solitary daisies dibbled into the loose earth, lying over on their sides, in spite of the small ration of water which had been carefully served out to each.

Thomas Callendar stood a moment gathering his senses. He had a callant of his own who might conceivably have been at the pains to establish a summer-house in his yard. But then James was at present at the seaside with his mother. The builder went round the little hut, and at the further side he came upon Cleg Kelly dribbling water upon the wilting daisies from a broken brown teapot, and holding on the lid with his other hand.

'Mercy on us! what are ye doing here, callant?' cried the astonished builder.

Cleg Kelly stood up with the teapot in his hand, taking care to keep the lid on as he did so. His life was so constant a succession of surprises provided against by watchfulness that hardly even an earthquake would have taken him unprepared.

He balanced the teapot in one hand, and with the other he pulled at his hat-brim to make his manners.

'If ye please, sir,' he said, 'they turned me oot at the brick-yaird, and I brocht the bits o' things here. I kenned ye wadna send me away, Maister Callendar.'

'How kenned ye that I wadna turn ye away, boy?' said the builder.

'Oh, I juist preferred to come back here, at ony rate,' said Cleg.

'But why?' persisted Mr. Callendar.

Cleg scratched the turned-up earth of his garden thoughtfully with his toe.

'Weel,' he said, 'if ye maun ken, it was because I had raither lippen¹ to the deil I ken than to the deil I dinna ken!'

The builder laughed good-naturedly.

'So ye think me a deil?' he asked, making believe to cut at the boy with the bit of planed moulding he was carrying

¹ Trust.

in his hand with black pencil marks at intervals upon it as a measuring-rod.

'Ow, it's juist a mainner o' speaking!' said Cleg, glancing up at Mr. Callendar with twinkling eyes. He knew that permission to bide was as good as granted. The builder came and looked within. The hut was whitewashed inside, and the black edges of the boards made transverse lines across the staring white.

Cleg explained.

'I didna steal the whitewash,' he said; 'I got it frae Andrew Heslop for helpin' him wi' his lime-mixing.'

'It's a fine healthsome, heartsome smell,' the boy went on, noticing that the builder was sniffing. 'Oh, man, it's the tar that ye smell,' he again broke in. 'I'm gaun to tar it on the ootside. It keeps the weather off famous. I gat the tar frae a watchman at the end o' the Lothian Road, where they are laying a new kind o' pavement wi' an awsome smell.'

The interior of the hut was shelved, and upon a pair of old trestles was a good new mattress. The builder looked curiously at it.

'It was the Pleasance student missionary got it in for my mither to lie on afore she died,' said Cleg in explanation.

'Aye, and your mither is awa,' said the builder; 'it's a release.'

'Aye, it is that,' said Cleg, from whose young heart sorrow of his mother's death had wholly passed away. He was not callous, but he was old-fashioned and world-experienced enough to recognise facts frankly. It was a release indeed for Isbel Kelly.

'Weel,' said the builder, 'mind ye behave yoursel'. Bring nae wild gilravage o' loons here, or oot ye gang.'

'Hearken ye, Maister,' said Cleg. 'There's no a boy atween Henry Place an' the Sooth Back that wull daur to show the ill-favoured face o' him within your muckle yett. I'll be the best watch that ever ye had, Maister Callendar. See if I'm no!'

The builder smiled as he went away. He took the measuring-rod of white moulding in his hand, and looked at the marks to recall what particular business he had been employed upon. But even as he did so a thought struck him. He turned back.

'Mind you,' he said to Cleg, 'the first time that ye bring the father o' ye aboot my yaird, to the curb-stane ye gang wi' a' your traps and trantlums!'

Cleg peeped elvishly out of his citadel.

'My faither,' he said, 'is snug in a far grander hoose than yours or mine, Maister Callendar. He has ta'en the accommodation for a year, and gotten close wark frae the Gowvernment a' the time!'

'What mean ye?' said the builder; 'your faither has never reformed?'

'Na, no that,' answered Cleg; 'but he got a year for ganging intil anither man's hoose without speering his leave. And I was there and saw the judge gie him a tongue-dressing afore he spoke oot the sentence. "One year!" says he. "Make it three, my Lord!" says I frae the back of the coort. So they ran me oot; but my faither kenned wha it was, for he cried, "May hunger, sickness, and trouble suck the life from ye, ye bloodsucking son of my sorrow! Wait till I get houl't o' ye! I'll make ye melt off the earth like the snow off a dyke, son o' mine though ye are!"'

The respectable builder stood aghast.

'And your ain faither said the like o' that till ye?' he asked, with a look of awe in his face as if he had been listening to blasphemy. 'And what did you say to him?'

'Faith! I only said, "I hope ye'll like the oakum, faither!"'

ADVENTURE XII.

VARA KAVANNAH OF THE TINKLERS' LANDS.

CLEG having finished his dispositions, shut to his door, and barred it with a cunning bolt shot with string, which he had constructed till he should be able to find an old lock to manipulate with the craft inherited from his father. Then he set forth for the Tinklers' Lands, to visit his friends the Kavannahs. He had delivered his papers in the early morning, and now he was free till the evening. For since a threatened descent of the police, Mistress Roy, that honest merchant, had discouraged Cleg from 'hanging round' after his work was finished. She attempted to do the discouraging with a broomstick or anything else that came handy. But Cleg was far too active to be struck by a woman. And, turning upon his mistress with a sudden flash of teeth like the grin of a wild cat, he sent that lady back upon the second line of her defences—into the little back shop where that peculiar company assembled which gave to Roy's paper-shop its other quality of shebeen.

Cleg had just reached the arched gateway which led into the builder's yard, when he saw, pottering along the side-walk twenty yards before him the squat, bandy-legged figure of his late landlord, Mr. Nathan. He had been going the round of the builders, endeavouring to discover which of them would effect the repairs of Tim Kelly's mansion at the least expense, and at the same time be prepared to satisfy the fiery Inspector of Sanitation.

Without a moment's hesitation, and as a mere matter of duty, Cleg bent his head, and, running full-tilt between his late landlord's legs, he overset him on the pavement and shot ahead on his way to make his morning call on the Kavannahs. The fulfilment of healthy natural function required that a well-conducted boy of good principles should cheek a policeman and overset a Jew landlord whenever met with. In such a war there could be no truce or parley.

Tinklers' Lands was in one of the worst parts of the city. Davie Dean's Street goes steeply down hill, and has apparently carried all its inhabitants with it. Tinklers' Lands is quite at the foot, and the inhabitants have come so low that they can fear no further fall. The Kavannahs, as has been said, dwelt in the cellar of the worst house in Tinklers' Lands.

Cleg ran down into the area and bent over the grating.

'Vara!' he cried, making a trumpet of the bars and his hands.

'Aye, Cleg, is that you?' said Vara. '*She's* oot; ye can come in.'

So Cleg trotted briskly down the slimy black steps, from which the top hand-rail had long since vanished. The stumpy palings themselves would also have disappeared if they had been anything else than cast metal, a material which can neither be burned nor profitably disposed of to the old Junk man.

Vara met him at the foot. She was a pleasant round-faced, merry-eyed girl of ten—or, rather, she would have been round-faced but for the pitiful drawing about the mouth and the frightened look with which she seemed to shrink back at any sudden movement near her. As Cleg arrived at the door of the cellar a foul, dank smell rose from the depths to meet him; and he, fresh from the air and cleanliness of his own new abode among the shavings and the chips, noticed it as he would not have done had he come directly from the house by the brickfield.

'*She gaed awa'* last nicht wi' an ill man,' said Vara, 'and I hae seen nocht o' her since.'

Vara Kavannah spoke of Sheemus Kavannah as 'faither,' but always of her mother as 'she.' To-day the girl had her fair hair done up in a womanly net and stowed away on the top of her head. When one has the cares of a house and family, it is necessary to dress in a grown-up fashion. Indeed, in some of her moods, when the trouble of Hugh and the baby lay heavy on her, Vara looked like a little old woman, as if she had been her own fairy godmother fallen upon evil times.

But to-day she had her head also tied in a napkin, rolled white and smooth about her brows. Cleg glanced at it with the quick comprehension which comes from a kindred bitterness.

'Her?' he queried, as much with his thumb and eyebrow as with his voice.

'Aye,' said Vara, looking down at the floor, for in the Lands such occurrences were not spoken of outside the family; 'yestreen.'

Hearing the voices at the door, little Hugh, Vara's brother of four, came toddling unevenly upon legs which ought to have been chubby, but which were only feeble and uncertain. He had one hand wrapped in a piece of white rag; and, whenever he remembered, he carried it in his other hand and wept over it with a sad, wearying whimper.

Cleg again looked his query at Vara.

'Aye,' said the girl, her eyes lighting this time with a glint of anger; 'the bairn toddled to her when she cam' hame, and he asked for a bit piece. And wi' that she took him and gied him a fling across the floor, and he hurt his airm on the corner of the bed.'

And Cleg, though he had given up swearing, swore.

'The wean's asleep!' said Vara; 'speak quietly.'

And upon tiptoe she led the way. The dusk of the cellar was so dense and the oppression of the foul air so terrible that had not Cleg been to the manner born, he could hardly have reached the little crib where the baby lay huddled among swathings of old petticoats and bits of flannel, while underneath was a layer of hay.

Vara stood gazing with inexpressible rapture at the babe.

'Isna he bonny—bonny?'

She clasped her hands as she spoke, and looked for the answering admiration in Cleg's face.

'Aye,' said Cleg, who knew what was demanded of him if he

expected to remain Vara Kavannah's friend; 'he's juist terrible bonny—elegant as a pictur'!

He had heard his father say that of a new 'jemmy.'

In truth, the babe was but skin and bone, with the drawn face of a mummy of five thousand years—and tiny hands, prehensile like those of a monkey.

'Vara,' said Cleg, 'ye canna bide here. I maun get ye awa'. This is no to be tholed. What hae ye had to eat the day?

'We had some broth that a neighbour brocht in yesterday and some fish. But the fish was bad,' said Vara, flushing and hesitating even to say these things to Cleg.

The badness of the fish, indeed, sufficiently advertised itself.

At the mention of something to eat little Hugh sharpened his croon of pain into a yell.

'Hugh's awsome hungry! Hugh boy wants his dinner!'

Vara went to him and knelt beside him.

'Hush thee, Hugh boy!' she said, speaking with a fragrance of motherliness which must have come to her from some ancestor, for certainly never in her life had she experienced anything like it. 'Hush! Hugh boy shall have his dinner if he is a good boy. Poor handie! Poor, poor handie!'

And the girl took the swollen wrist and torn hand into hers and rocked to and fro with the boy on her knee.

'Hugh is gaun to be a man,' she said. 'He wadna greet. Na, he will wait till faither comes hame. And then he will get ham, nice ham, singing in the pan; aye, and red herring brandering on the fire, and salmon in tins, an' aipples, an' oranges, and cancellaries.'

'Looh, aye, but that wull be guid!' said Hugh, stopping his crying to listen to the enthralling catalogue.

'Aye,' said Vara, 'and when faither comes hame, he will tak' us away to a boony hoose to leeve where the ships sail by. For dadda has gane to the seaside to look for wark. It will be a bonny hoose wi' swings at every door, and blacky men that dance in braw, striped claes, and shows. And Hugh boy shall gang to them a'. We'll howk holes in the sand, and fill the dirt into buckets, and row our girls, Hughie. And we shall paidle in the tide, and splash the bonny water aboon oor heids!'

'Oh, oh,' cried the child, 'Hugh boy wants to gang noo. He wants to paidle in the bonny water and eat the oranges!'

'Bide ye, bonny man,' said Maggie, fondling him, 'that's a' to be when dadda comes hame.'

'Hugh boy is gangin' to the door to look for dadda!' said the boy as he moved off with his bandaged hand clutched to his side.

The baby in the bunk among the old clouts set up a crying, and Cleg went to it, for he was touched to the heart by the voice of dumb things in pain, whether babes or beasts.

But little Gavin (called for a comrade of Sheemus Kavannah's who had been kind to him) was wrinkling all his face into a myriad crinkles. Then, lifting up the tiniest shrill pipe, he cried with the cry of underfed and ill-used childhood—a cry that breaks off sharp in the middle and never attains to the lusty roar of the healthy and well-grown malcontent.

Vara flew to Gavin and, taking the babe in her arms, she hushed him back again to sleep, making a swift gesture of command for silence. She kept her eyes fondly upon the peaked little face, till the wailing ceased, the tiny clenched hand fell back from the puckered face, and the infant dropped again to sleep, clasping the frill of Vara's pinafore with fingers like bird claws.

'I was feared he wad waken an' I had nocht to gie him!' she explained, simply.

'God!' said Cleg; 'I canna stand this.'

And without a word he skimmed up the cellar steps and out. He went straight to his mistress of the paper-shop, and with her he had a loud-voiced and maledictory interview, in which he endeavoured to uplift his week's wage before it was due. There were threats and recriminations on both sides before a compromise was effected. It ended in the half, which had already been worked for, being paid over in view of instant necessities—which, it is to be regretted, Cleg did not quite truthfully represent to Mistress Roy.

Then, with two silver shillings in his hand, Cleg went and bought twopence worth of meat from the neck and a penny bone for boiling, a penny worth of carrots, a halfpenny cabbage, a large four-pound loaf, and twopence worth of the best milk. To this he added two apples and an orange for Hugh, so that he might have a foretaste of the golden time when dadda should come home.

It was as good as a circus procession when Cleg went back laden like a bee, and no humble bee either, to the cellar in Tinklers' Lands. He had his head in the air and his chest out, just as he used to march when he heard the regiments coming down the High Street from the Castle, and caught a glimpse of their swinging tartans and towering plumes.

Vara met him at the door. She raised her hands in amaze,

but mechanically checked the cry of gladness and admiration on her lips as Cleg came scrambling down, without ever minding his feet on the slippery stairs.

'Cleg Kelly!' said she, speaking under her breath, 'what are ye doin' wi' a' that meat?'

'Oh, it's nocht ava,' said Cleg lightly; 'it's juist some things that I had nae use for this week. Ye ken I'm watchman noo at Callendar's as weel as working at the paper-shop!'

'Save us!' said Vara, 'this is never a' for us. I canna tak' it. I canna!'

'Aye, is it!' said Cleg, 'an' you tak' it for the bairns' sake. Sheemus will pay me when he comes back, gin ye like!'

Vara's heart broke out in a cry, 'O Cleg, I canna thank ye!' And her tears fairly rained down while she sobbed quickly and freely.

'Dinna, Vara, dinna, lassie!' said Cleg, edging for the door; 'ye maun stop that or I declare I'll hae to rin!'

From within came the babe's cry. But it had no terrors for Vara now.

'Greet, Gavin, greet,' she cried; 'aye, that is richt. Let us hear something like a noise, for I hae gotten something to gie ye at last.'

So she hasted and ran for the baby's bottle—which, as in all poor houses, was one of Maw's best. She mixed rapidly the due proportions of milk and water, and tested the drawing of the tube with her mouth as she ran to the cot. At first the babe could not be brought to believe in the genuineness of the nourishment offered, so often had the cold comfort of the empty tube been offered. It was a moment or two before he tasted the milk; but, as soon as he did so, his outcry ceased as if by magic, the puckers smoothed out, and the big solemn baby eyes fixed themselves on the ceiling of the cellar with a stare of grave rapture.

Then Cleg took himself off, with a hop and a skip up the steps, having seen Hugh settled to his bread and butter, eating eagerly and jealously, but never for a moment letting the orange, earnest of the Promised Land of his father's return, out of his other hand. Vara was putting away the great store of provision in the empty cupboard when Cleg looked his last down the grating which admitted the scanty light to the Kavannahs' home.

There had been few happier days in Cleg Kelly's life than this

on which he spent the half of his week's wage for the benefit of the Kavannahs.

So altogether happy did he feel that he went and cuffed the ears of two well-dressed boys for looking at him. Then he threw their new bonnets in the gutter and departed in a perfect glow of happiness and philanthropy.

ADVENTURE XIII.

CLEG'S SECOND BURGLARY.

CLEG slept soundly on his bed within the whitewashed hut. The last thing he did the night before was to go to the bench where the men had been working, and bring an armful of the fragrant pine shavings for a bouquet to scent his chamber. And never did boys sleep better. It must be confessed, however, that the position of night-watchman at Callendar's, of which he had boasted to Vara Kavannah, was entirely a sinecure. For it was not till he heard the gruff voices of the men clicking their tools and answering one another in pre-breakfast monosyllables that he realised he had changed his abode. Then he stirred so sharply that the mattress fell off the trestles, and Cleg was brought up all standing against the side of the hut.

All that day he went about his duties as usual. He trotted to his newspaper office and distributed his roll of papers mechanically; but his mind was with the Kavannahs, and he longed for the time to come when he could, with some self-respect, go and gloat over the effects of his generosity. Doubtless there was a touch of self-glorification in this, which, however, he kept strictly to himself. But who will grudge it to a boy, who for the sake of a lassie has spent nearly half of his week's wage, and who knows that he will have to live on bread and water for ten days in consequence?

Cleg judged that it would not be advisable for him to go to Tinklers' Lands before noon. So in the meanwhile he betook himself to Simon Square to 'lag for' Humpy Joe, who had called him 'Irishman' the previous evening, at a time when, with his papers under his arm, Cleg was incapacitated for warfare, being, like Martha, much cumbered with serving.

But Humpy Joe proved unattainable. For he had seen his enemy's approach, and as soon as Cleg set foot within the square, he saluted him with a rotten egg, carefully selected and laid aside

for such an emergency. And had it not been for the habitual watchfulness of Cleg, Joe's missile would have 'got him.' But as it was, a sudden leap into the air like that of a jack-in-the-box just cleared the danger, and the egg, passing between Cleg's bare feet, made a long yolky mark of exclamation on the ground.

Being defeated in this, Humpy Joe looked forth from an end window, and entertained the neighbourhood with a gratuitous and wholly untrustworthy account of Cleg's ancestors. And Cleg, in reply, devised ingenious tortures, which he declared would be the portion of Humpy Joe, when next he caught him 'out.'

Thus, after tiring of this, the embattled belligerents separated in high delight and with mutual respect and good feeling, vowing sanguinary vengeance when next they should meet at Sunday School.

At last the time came for Cleg to feast his happy eyes upon the table which had been spread by his means for his friends the Kavannahs. But first he lingered awhile about the end of Davie Dean's Street, ostentatiously looking for a boy to lick, and throwing stones over the wall at the baker's fat watch-dog to make it bark. In reality he was making sure that none of his companions were in the neighbourhood, lest, with some colour of truth, they should cast up at him the capital offence of 'speaking to a lassie.'

At last the coast was clear. The only boy within half a mile had been chased under the protection of the great guns of his own fortress, being the vicinity of his mother's wash-tubs. Then Cleg dived quickly down to the cellar beneath Tinklers' Lands.

For the first time in his experience, the door was shut. Cleg had set his ear to the keyhole and listened. Then he put his eye there. But neither sense told him anything.

'Vara!' he cried softly, and set his ear against the floor. Cleg knew that the place to hear behind a door (if there is no danger of its being hastily opened) is not at the keyhole, but close to the floor. He listened, holding his breath. At first he could hear nothing; but in a little, a low sob at stated intervals detached itself from the cursory noises made by the other tenants of Tinklers' Lands and from the steady growl of the streets above.

'Vara!' he cried, a little louder; 'Vara Kavannah, are ye in? What's wrang?'

Still nothing came back to him but the mechanical sob, which wore his patience suddenly to the breaking point.

'They're a' killed,' said Cleg, who had once been at the open-

ing of a door, and had seen that which was within. 'I'll break open the door. And with that he dashed himself against it. But the strength of the bolt resisted his utmost strength.

'Cleg,' said a voice from within, very weak and feeble, 'gang awa' like a guid lad. Dinna come here ony mair——'

It was Vara's voice, speaking through pain and tears.

'Vara,' said Cleg, 'what's wrang? What for wull ye no open the door?'

'I canna, Cleg; she's here, lyin' on the floor in the corner. I canna turn the key, for she has tied me to the bed-foot.'

Cleg instantly understood the circumstances. They were none so unprecedented in the neighbourhood of Tinklers' Lands. Sal Kavannah had come home drunk, singly or in company. She had abused the children, and ended by tying up Vara, lest she should go out while she lay in her drunken sleep. Such things had been done within Cleg's knowledge—aye, things infinitely worse than these. And with his unchildish wisdom Cleg feared the worst.

But he was not Tim Kelly's son for nothing. And it did not cost him a moment to search in his pockets for a fine strong piece of twine, such as all shoemakers use. He always carried at least ten sorts of cord about with him. This cobbler's string was a special brand, so wonderful that Cleg had made friends with the shoemaker's boy (whom he loathed) solely in order to obtain it.

Cleg knew that the key was in the lock, but that the wards were turned clear, for his eyes, growing accustomed to the gloom, could now look into the cellar. He also knew that nine door-keys out of ten have a little groove at the end of the shank just below the wards. So he made a noose of the fine, hard cobbler's twine, and slipped it into the keyhole just as if he had been 'girning' sticklebacks and 'bairdies' in the shallow burns about the Loch of Lochend.

After a failure or two the loop caught and tightened. Then Cleg shook the string about with a cunning see-sawing motion, learned from his father, till he felt the wards of the key drop down perpendicularly. Then he took a long piece of stick, and, thrusting it into the keyhole, he had the satisfaction of feeling the key drop inside the door, and hang by the cobbler's twine. He eased it down to the floor, and found that, as is the case with most doors, the bottom of that of the cellar of Tinklers' Lands did not come quite close to the floor. It was therefore easy for Cleg to dangle the key a little till he could bring the end of it to the place where

the arch was worn widest. Then he took his hooked wire and pulled the key towards him. It was in itself a pretty trick, and was executed by Cleg in far less time than it takes to tell about it.

With the key in his hand, and in the other an open clasp-knife, Cleg turned the bolt back and stepped within. A terrible enough sight met his eyes, though not that which he dreaded. In the corner lay Sal Kavannah, with a pair of empty bottles tossed at her side, her black hair over her face, lying drawn together in a heap. Tied to the bed was Vara, bleeding from a cut on the head, and trying to cover her arms and hands from his sight. But Hugh and the baby lay in the bunk together, sleeping peacefully. It was upon poor Vara that the brunt of the woman's maniac fury had fallen.

Cleg stood stricken; but the sight of Vara bound with cords aroused him. He had the knife in his hand, and it did not take a moment to free her. But she was so stiff and exhausted that she fell forward on her face as soon as the straps were removed. Then, after Cleg had lifted her, he turned upon the sodden heap in the corner, and, with his knife glittering in his hand and the wild-cat grin on his face, he said, with a deep indrawing of his breath, 'Oh, if ye had only been my ain faither!'

And it was as well that it was Sal Kavannah and not Tim Kelly that had done this thing.

Now, in an emergency Cleg always acted first and asked leave afterwards.

'Come awa' oot o' this, Vara, and I'll bring the bairn and Hugh,' said he to the girl, when she was somewhat recovered.

'But, Cleg, where are we to gang?' said Vara, starting back.

'Never you heed, Vara; there maun be nae mair o' this frae this time oot.'

His manner was so positive that the girl gave way. Anything rather than abide with the thing which lay in the corner.

'Hae ye ocht that ye wad like to bring wi' ye?' Cleg asked of Vara, as he shouldered Hugh, and took up the baby on his other arm.

'Aye,' said Vara, 'wee Gavin's feedin' bottle.'

And she had to step over the sodden face of her mother to get it.

So the four went out into the noonday streets, and Cleg marched forth like the pipe-major of the Black Watch—than whom no king on earth walks with more dignity and pomp, when there is a big parade and the full band of pipers leads the regiment

Cleg almost wished that Humpy Joe might see him and taunt him, so that on Sunday he might beat him to a jelly. But, as it chanced, the streets were deserted, for it was the very middle of the workmen's dinner-hour. So that the streams that went and came a quarter of an hour sooner and a quarter of an hour later were for the moment all safely housed; while those who had brought their dinners with them sat on benches in the shade, and took no notice of the small forlorn company passing along the causeway.

There was another way to the old construction hut at the back of Callendar's yard which did not lead through the main gateway, but entered from some waste ground, where only broken bottles and old tin cans dwelt.

The children passed safely and unobserved by this way, and in a little while Cleg had them safely housed in his own city of refuge. But Vara was in great fear lest some of the men should see them and turn them out upon the street. So Cleg shut the door upon them with the lock of his own devising, and started at a run to find Mr. Callendar.

(To be continued.)

IN CHALET LAND.

THERE is probably no better change to tired dwellers in cities, and no such rest to overstrained nerves—the disease of these wild nineteenth-century days—than may be obtained from a temporary residence in one of the mountain valleys of Switzerland. But the valley should be far enough from the trammels of civilisation to allow of perfect freedom, and the stay should, if possible, be a long one, for the charms of the mountain life do not reveal themselves all at once. The first thing apt loudly to assert itself is the absence of those ‘comforts’ to which we poor creatures of habit are so accustomed, but which, in a few days, we find to be quite unnecessary. Given good air, a glorious mountain view on every side, perfect cleanliness, sufficient eatable food, and good beds (always to be found in the simplest Swiss home), it is astonishing how little else is really required.

Last year, in a mountain walk in the Canton of Vaud, twenty-five miles from the railway line, I passed, on the outskirts of a large mountain village what seemed to me a perfect example of the ‘Chalet Suisse.’ To my sorrow it was let to a French family, upon whom we stole a march the following spring by securing it for ourselves at an early date.

These chalets are all built of plain white wood (there are, by the way, a few stone houses, but they look glaring and awkward, as if conscious they had no right to be there), and are capable of being washed, inside and out, with honest soap and water.

The poorer sort have their staircase on the outside, which adds much to their picturesque appearance; all have sombre overhanging eaves, from three to nine feet in depth. These are a wonderful protection both from the winter snow and summer sun. We have been surprised to find a room of south aspect perfectly cool in the dog days, for the sun, being high in the heavens, does not penetrate below the spreading eaves. This seems to show ingenuity on the part of the builder, for the same room in winter, when the sun is low, will catch every ray of warmth. Much taste is shown in the decoration of the exterior, where the skill of the native artist asserts itself in telling bits of coloured carving—red, blue, green, and violet, set off sometimes by a white background. There are, of course, the unfailing green shutters (the pastor’s

house is marked always by green-and-white shutters) and the large roomy square balcony, well protected from wind and rain, affording accommodation for the whole family, and serving often both as dining and sitting room. How one longs to see this friendly adjunct shared by the houses of our English poor! Our much-maligned climate would not prevent the enjoyment of a balcony, which is a real promoter both of health and pleasure. Yet, as a rule, it is the rich who enjoy this simple luxury, which, with a little enlarging of the mind (or shall we say the heart?) of the architect, might so easily be accorded also to the poor. Invariably there is a projecting shelf with a carefully tended row of flowers, and much effect is gained by this one row of brilliant colour.

In course of years the outside of the house is dyed by the sun, first yellow, then a golden brown, and finally it becomes almost black. A few are entirely grey. The latter shade, the peasants say, is the work of the setting sun, but I confess to finding this theory difficult to credit. The blending of the many shades on the undulating green of the mountain slope makes a most harmonious whole.

Each chalet has its store of wood for fuel, neatly stacked on the outside—for theft is unknown in this honest valley—and each bears a record, burnt or painted on the front, of the name of the builders, followed usually by the date of building and a touching prayer or invocation for the blessing of God on the house and its inmates, with sometimes an exhortation to lead pious and God-fearing lives to those who come after. The following inscriptions I copy from houses in our immediate neighbourhood. The French is at times old and difficult to decipher, at others too illiterate to copy at all.

1701. Dieu bénie cette maison, et tous ceux qui la posséderont. O Eternel, sois le conducteur de leurs saisons en paix, et leur donner bonheur, et puis la vie éternelle. Amen.

1792. (On a cattle shed.) Dieu nous conserve nos bêtes. R. M. A. F.

(On a house for summer only.) Etre Suprême! Dieu de toute puissance! protège ceux qui l'habiteront en été.

Par la grâce de Dieu, Pierre et Jehan Rossier frères ont fait bâtir cette maison, Dieu l'ayant III^e béni, et en chacune saison en paix.

1819. Par le secours divin, Jean Brincod a fait bâtir cette maison par Maître Moïse Henchoz. Oh! mortel véritablement l'ami de ton Dieu et de l'homme, garde ses commandemens; alors le temps fera ton bonheur et l'Eternel ta félicité.

Les possesseurs du présent bâtiment sont exortés très-sérieusement à craindre Dieu, garder soigneusement tous ses status et saints commandemens, pour avec

lui vivre éternellement, car la vie est un chemin de justice, et la voie du sentier de celle-ci ne tend point à la mort. J. R. H. S. M. H.

1886. Que la bénédiction de Dieu et sa paix reposent sur cette maison.
L. R. E. R.

This brings me to the religion of these mountain people. The stern Calvinism of Protestant Switzerland, so hard and unattractive in the plains, is here much tempered and modified; and the simple villager, who has no outside distractions, lives so near to God and Heaven that one is constantly reminded of the extraordinary faith and devotion of the Roman Catholic peasantry of Tyrol and Bavaria. In this connection a saying attributed to John Bright often occurs to me, 'All good people are of the same religion.' But the peasant of Tyrol—from a long residence in his sunlit land, I am much attached to him—will lie and steal, for all his devotion. Be merciful, kind reader. It is his special temptation (I know it is not *yours*). My sympathy is with *him*, but with sorrow I own that my Protestant peasant of to-day is more upright both in word and deed. The most scrupulous truth and honesty prevail. A low, unvarying market price, a just weight, a fair wage. If a stranger try to bargain, he is looked at with contempt, not to say distrust, and a quiet, 'On n'a pas l'habitude de surfaire, Monsieur,' teaches him, we hope, his mistake. It is edifying to see the whole village turn out for church at nine o'clock on Sunday morning, climbing cheerfully a very steep hill—for, as usual, the ancient church is built on the highest available natural eminence, from which it picturesquely dominates the whole village—but the ascent is hard work for the sick and aged, who seem not to have been considered in the days of its construction. The children assemble in the afternoon for a 'Catéchisme,' or children's service, which is obligatory till the age of sixteen. The Holy Communion is celebrated four times a year, on two consecutive Sundays, when every soul in the district who has been confirmed attends, all attired in black, so that the effect is that of a funeral. The sexes are divided—men on one side and women on the other—and when the time for Communion arrives the men file one behind the other in long procession to the 'table,' at which they reverently stand with bowed head. The women follow, and the whole time the Bible is read aloud from the pulpit by the schoolmaster. The effect on a stranger is impressive and devotional. One may well be shocked by the bare ugliness of the interior of the church, and especially by the huge black pipe of

the stove, which passes, without any ceremony, clean through the east window. But the good Calvinist mind requires evidently no external aid to devotion, just as the Calvinist body is satisfied with the hardest of deal seats, which often have no backs at all. In the churchyard we found one English grave, quite overgrown with nettles. It is that of a young orphan girl, who died here seventy years ago, at the age of twenty-one. This poor little grave seems always to appeal to us, and we carefully tend it and plant it with flowers, and ask ourselves what was the sad history of 'Rose Hopkins,' and what brought her to die so far from her English home.

Agriculture is naturally the chief industry of these mountain folk. Neither the vine corn nor any edible grain will grow at this altitude—3,700 feet—and apples, pears, currants, gooseberries, and wild strawberries and raspberries are the only fruit, but the crops of hay are superabundant. The process of hay making is, owing to the dryness of the climate, much shorter than with us. The whole family turn out with the first ray of light to mow, the women also using the scythe, and there is little hired help. The next process is to 'fener' (throw the hay high into the air with a fork), and by the next day, with the help of a broiling sun, it is ready to be put into cock, and carried at once to the barn.

A large net, called a 'filard,' is spread on the ground, and an enormous amount of hay put into it. This is securely tied by the ropes of the net; then hoisted on to the shoulders of the head of the family. Like a tottering hay-cock he struggles to the barn—often a considerable distance—and then reappears for another load.

The production of cream, butter, and cheese is very abundant. One pities the poor cows, who, once or twice a year, are taken higher in the mountains or into the fields to graze, but who spend the rest of their lives in cramped little cowsheds, with no air save the opening of a window, which is considered amply sufficient for a supply of ozone. As the cow, however, is of a gigantic build and gives excellent milk, I presume no harm is done by this life of seclusion.

Cream and eggs are usually the only refreshment to be obtained by weary travellers, who, after hours of climbing, come upon a chance mountain chalet. A huge bowl of cream is produced, and to each of the party is given a quaint wooden spoon, with which they all dip into the same dish. These spoons are

well carved, and are often heirlooms in the family. As often as not payment is altogether refused, which drives one to the conclusion that, allowing for a large-hearted generosity, these 'montagnards' are not as poor as they look.

Milk is carried to be sold at the village *laiterie* in a sort of flat tin case, called a 'boille,' strapped to the back of the seller. The large flat cheeses he carries on his head in a quaint tray, with arms and legs, called 'un oiseau.' I use the *patois* of the country, which does not, we hope, aspire to be French. The elder women, besides the privilege of knitting socks and stockings for the entire family, have an industry all their own. They receive willingly the oldest dresses, petticoats, old linen rags—in fact every kind of 'chiffon'—with which they weave an admirable sort of washing carpet, which is very durable. The colours are well blended, and even at home this carpet would not be despised for what Maple & Co. call 'secondary bedrooms.' It is sold for about two francs a yard. I have not yet tried, but I am sure I should have much satisfaction in thus treading under foot my discarded town garments. Here one's dress is of the very simplest, and it is a question whether, in course of time, one might not, in that respect, become quite a peasant. Walking skirts and washing blouses are the staple dress for a summer visit, with something very warm and very woollen for the few days of excessive cold and wet which will occasionally drive us shivering indoors even in midsummer. We certainly cannot pretend to an equable climate.

The native refinement of the peasantry is wonderful, though of what we understand by the degraded term 'gentlepeople' there are absolutely none. Of Nature's gentlefolk there are indeed many. I wish I could introduce my reader to our friendly old landlord, who, with his worthy wife, lives in the lower part of our chalet. I took him at first for a gardener—a tall, spare old man, working in his shirt-sleeves, who received me with a gentle dignity and courtesy which would not disgrace an archbishop. He and his wife have no servants; they do their own work, and gather their own crops with but little help. Yet there is no more important person in the whole neighbourhood than 'Monsieur Durieu père.' He owns a fair amount of land, is president of the village, treasurer of the infirmary, head of the workhouse, and general relieving officer, so to speak. All these unpaid responsibilities call him much away, and are looked upon by his wife with

mingled pride and sorrow. She is much alone in consequence, and yet there is the consolation 'Mais oui, mon mari est indispensable au village.' Then there is the portly young banker—married to the richest heiress of the place—who milks his own cow and makes his own hay. The business of banking does not, apparently, absorb either his time or his energy, and it is amusing to see him, three times a day, patiently going, 'vers sa vache,' attending himself to the immured and solitary beast, who gives forth excellent milk, quite worthy of a lengthy inscription under which she lives. The banker's quiverful of sturdy little boys are an excellent testimony to the quality of the milk; and their manners, like those of every little urchin in the place, are delightful. Their interest in 'ces dames' is sincere and keen, and they never fail to take off their hats with the hearty 'adieu' which is the common salutation both for meeting and parting. Their bearing generally well conveys their own idea of a friendly equality not devoid of respect. Very upsetting to English ideas are the number of commissions given to our driver whenever we hire a carriage for a distant drive. We set out, of course, with a feeble notion that a carriage and driver, hired and paid for by ourselves, was, for the time being, all our own. But no! An ineradicable principle of mountain Switzerland is 'thrift.' If *our* driver can execute the commission it will save certainly a stamp, and perhaps the expense of a special messenger. So it is no uncommon thing for a woman to stop our coachman: 'My sister lives in the last house in such-and-such a village. Will you please give her my best love, and tell her, &c., &c.?' or some errand of a like nature. A boy pursued the carriage some distance one day with a watch to be given to his brother in some place which was on our way. Our leave is never asked, but we are expected to wait (and let us admit that we *do* wait) in the village street till the errand is satisfactorily executed. On the whole it does us no harm to have our insular notions upset, and we hope to return to England two wiser and less exacting women.

Not to give too *couleur de rose* an account, I will frankly own that one must go through a good deal to set up even the semblance of a comfortable English home under the circumstances. Our chalet, standing with a quaint little dignity in its little plot of white-railed garden, where peas, cabbages, lettuces, and old-fashioned garden flowers smile away in queer little rows in front of our sitting-room windows, our creeper-covered balcony, and

inside the dainty spotlessness of our wooden walls, *look* most inviting; but there is more to do, we find, than simply to lie down in our soft white beds. In twenty-four hours we discover that our two Swiss maidens think 'civilisation' the English for 'bêtise.' They know how to scrub and clean—in fact, the everlasting cleaning necessitated a strike on our part; for we could stand it no longer. But, in everything concerning the niceties of life, one comes to a blank wall of ignorance very hard to break down.

The laying of the table and waiting thereat are a mystery, which even now, after twelve weeks' trial, is scarcely fathomed. A friend, who laid her own table with some care, told me it was considered so mysterious a work of art that she used to hear her maid bringing in various friends and relations to wonder and admire.

We took our cook 'Céleste' entirely on the score of her 'devotion to our person,' to borrow a royal expression; but in a few days we felt anything but royal, her ideas of cooking being most eccentric. She would put the potatoes on soon after breakfast, let them boil a little, cool a little, and then boil a second and third time. Finally, they sat on the kitchen-table and degenerated into a tepid, sodden mass whose sole virtue was economy, for we could not eat them at all.

In self-defence I one day made a cake, and left Céleste to bake it. She let the fire out at least three times during the baking, and brought the cake twice to me on the balcony, remarking that we should be fortunate if it were done by to-morrow. As I had forgotten the butter, it is perhaps well to draw a modest veil over the result.

Our parlourmaid 'Rosine,' who does not sleep in the house, comes regularly, with broad smiling face, to shake hands and say 'Good-night' before she goes home. Swiss maids have no idea of tidying themselves and 'presenting arms' in the afternoon, as their English sisters would do. We invited friends to tea, and insisted on clean caps and aprons. No one *could* have looked more fresh and dainty; but just as we expect our tea-party, Céleste, with a laudable desire not to waste time, encamps outside the front door, and proceeds to polish, with many doubtful looking rags, a whole array of brass candlesticks. To our horror, we find our plate is also cleaned in this prominent position, for Rosine has never heard of a thief. Our boots, I regret to say, after some needful repairs, lived outside for half a day, in full view of the High Road. Perhaps Céleste's most trying performance was when

I confided to her my dress, from which she begged to clean a single grease spot. To my dismay, that afternoon I descried in the public washing-trough a black mass, a shapeless, melancholy pulp, which proved on investigation to be my decent black gown. I fear I was not much consoled by Céleste's remark, 'Du moins, c'est propre,' but I thanked her humbly, for she is soft-hearted and meant well.

After all, these are the smallest of minor evils when compared with all the rest, refreshment, and novelty we have enjoyed in our mountain retreat, and it will be a sad day when we must turn our backs upon our chalet home, to take up—cheerfully, we hope, and willingly—the responsibilities of our more burdensome English life.

AN OUT-OF-DATE REFORMER.

I.

THE little shop stood on the Glasgow Road, near the entrance to Drumsynie. It was, in fact, merely the front room of a house, one of a row, the others being occupied by weavers. There was no modern display in the shop-window—no sham heaps of raisins and currants. The upper part of it was fitted with shelves, on which were placed large jars of sweets, with sugar animals between them; the lower part held oranges and apples. For many years there had been over the door a signboard bearing the words—

WILLIAM GILLESPIE,

Licensed to retail Tea and Tobacco.

It was a frosty morning, the first day of November. At half-past seven William Gillespie stood outside his shop-door. He was a tall, thin-faced, beardless man. His fine grey hair hung straight down under the ancient tall hat which he wore. By his side stood his son, his only son, John. He was shorter than his father, and rather thick-set, but pale and delicate-looking. By his side stood a large carpet-bag, full to bursting, for it contained not only his library and his wardrobe, but a selection of provisions from the shop. The young man might have been nineteen years old. He wore a black overcoat, a good deal worn and two sizes too small for him, black cloth gloves, and a flat-topped Scotch bonnet.

So much might be seen by the light of a candle which Mrs. Gillespie, standing just within the shop-door, held in her hand. Outside it was quite dark, but for the reflection from the sprinkling of snow in the road.

No words passed between the three. All needful instructions and exhortations had been given. And, besides, Mr. Gillespie's heart was too full for words. The first step towards the realisation of the long-cherished wish of his heart was about to be taken. His son was on his way to college, to become a minister.

Soon the trampling of hoofs and the roll of wheels were heard in the stillness. Then the gleam of the coach lamps shone on the snow, as the coach turned the corner.

John seized his carpet-bag with his left hand, and gave his

right to his father. Neither of them spoke a word; it was not needed. Then John hurriedly embraced his mother. He had barely time to do so, when the coach—a truncated, low-roofed omnibus, drawn by three lean horses yoked abreast—stopped at the door.

‘Outside or in?’ called out the coachman.

‘Out,’ replied the lad. The fare was three shillings outside, four shillings inside; and that, of course, settled the question.

John handed up his big carpet-bag, and climbed up after it.

A minute afterwards, looking back, he saw the light still burning. His father was standing with his hat off, and his grey head bowed down upon his breast.

II.

John Gillespie did not belie his father’s hopes. He was steady and worked hard, attracting little notice, but respected by those who knew him.

Of course he was very poor. Often he would gladly have joined himself to the group of ragged lads who hung about the railway-stations in the hope of earning a few pence by carrying big portmanteaus. It was next to impossible for him to earn money; the poor student’s resource, coaching dull schoolboys, was not open to him. His clothes were too shabby, and he had no introductions. But he struggled through the winter somehow, and went home at the end of April with two unreadable volumes bound in white-and-gold, and with the college arms stamped on them, in the big carpet-bag.

Next November, when he returned to college for a second session, Gillespie was no longer a boy. He was beginning to look out upon the world, and form his own judgments of what he saw there.

What he saw did not please him. Perhaps he was a little soured by his poverty. At any rate, he looked on the ostentatious display of wealth made by the fat, good-natured citizens around him with something of a jaundiced and jealous eye.

In church matters he was even less satisfied. The services in the large city churches did not please the student accustomed to a bare simplicity of worship from his childhood. Organs, trained choirs, stained-glass windows, luxurious pews, multiplicity of hymns, with shortened prayers and sermons, and, above all, the custom of standing to sing and sitting at prayer, obtained every-

where; and these things were as smoke to his nostrils. It seemed to him that modern Presbyterianism was deeply tainted with the vices of prosperity.

And there was a special reason why young Gillespie took these things to heart. It was a fact, though he never spoke of it even to his most intimate companions, that he was lineally descended from Robert Gillespie, who had given his life for the good cause, having been hanged at the Grassmarket in the dark days before the Revolution. Yes, the blood of a martyr flowed in the young man's veins; and many a time did his head unconsciously raise itself, and his eye flash with a strange gleam, as he thought of it.

'What would my ancestor have said to all this?' he would think to himself, as he entered a fashionable church, and noted the signs of luxury around him, while the soft tones of an expensive organ filled his ears. 'Was it for this that Robert Gillespie, and many a one like him, suffered and died—that men might be free to worship God on soft-cushioned seats instead of a wet hill-side?'

These thoughts he locked up in his own breast. He confided in no one, or answers might have been given to his questions which might, in part at least, have satisfied him. Only to his father did he hint at what was passing in his mind; and the old man, delighted to find that his son was minded to walk in the old paths and was undazzled by the glitter of wealth and the softness of modern times, answered with a few emphatic words of approval.

And gradually the idea formed itself in the young man's mind that the noblest destiny conceivable would be to bring back Scotland to the principles of the Covenant—to restore to her the old simplicity of worship, the old fervour of faith, the old stern intolerance of compromise with evil. He felt convinced that such a reform was possible; that it was more through heedlessness and love of display, and careless good nature, that Scotchmen had strayed so far from the ways of their forefathers than from any intention of wrongdoing. They needed but a voice to bring them back to their allegiance, to fill their hearts once more with the old Puritan fire.

For seven years—during the whole time of his attendance at college and at the divinity classes—this idea haunted his mind; and there can be no great wonder that finally he began to think that he himself might be the divinely appointed instrument for the execution of this great task. Was he not marked out for the

work by his lineage, by his calling to the ministry, above all by his profound attachment to the memory of the Covenanters and to their principles? He well knew that he was neither eloquent, nor learned, nor endowed with a commanding presence. But he knew also that some, at least, of the great reformers had possessed no such gifts. He was conscious that their spirit was working within him; besides, as he told himself with a humility that was not altogether false, the less fitted the tool for the work in hand, the greater the glory of Him who used it. 'The treasure,' he would whisper to himself, 'is in earthen vessels, that the glory and praise may be of God.'

The years passed by, and in due course the Presbytery of Stonyford, to which John Gillespie owed allegiance, licensed him as a preacher.

The young minister's first sermon was preached in Drumsynie, in the little square church in which he had worshipped since his boyhood. Half the town, as it seemed, flocked to hear him. Some were attracted by a kindly interest in their young townsman; others were simply attracted by a desire of obtaining a little excitement in a legitimate way on that day of the week when excitement of any kind was hard to come by. A few, perhaps, came from the malicious hope of witnessing an ignominious breakdown. But if any of John Gillespie's hearers belonged to this category they went away disappointed.

The preacher seemed unconscious of the fact that the critical eyes of his friends and neighbours were upon him. He looked the congregation boldly in the face as he read out his text: '*I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*' It was, in a word, a sermon in praise of the Covenanters; and it appealed both to the religious convictions and the patriotic feelings of the people. They listened with gratified pride while the clergyman reminded them that their own fields had been reddened by the blood of those who had fallen gloriously in the cause of civil and religious liberty; nor did they take it amiss when they were told in plain terms that they were but degenerate sons of these well-nigh forgotten heroes.

Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie, as they made their way out of the church porch, heard on all sides admiring comments.

'That was a grand sermon,' said one elder to another.

'Aye; a most powerful discourse. Mark my words, Tammas; that young man will rise very far.'

Old Gillespie's face gave no sign as these words fell upon his ears; but his heart beat with paternal pride, and he felt his wife's thin fingers tremble on his arm.

'Let us not be overmuch uplifted, Grace,' said the old man to his wife when they were out of hearing. "'Pride," ye ken, "goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." And yet,' he added with a sigh of content, 'he seems a gracious lad; and I am thankfu' he has found acceptance among the Lord's people.'

Gillespie was now called on to 'supply the pulpits' of ministers who left home, and to preach in vacant churches. And for a time his services in both capacities were in considerable demand. But before long people began to say that they were tired of hearing sermons about the Solemn League and Covenant, and modern declensions from that high standard. No matter what text the young minister chose, it was an absolute certainty that before the end of his sermon he would revert to his accustomed theme. Sometimes he would detect a smile on the faces of some of his audience when allusions were made to the great men of the past; but Gillespie never so much as dreamt of omitting a word of his message for any regard for the opinions of others. It was in vain that some of the older ministers hinted to him that it would be well to avoid the subject for a time. Gillespie received such admonitions with a stern and chilling silence. In his heart he despised such counsels as carnal and self-seeking.

William Gillespie was far too shrewd a man to be blind to the fact that his son's devotion to the cause of the Covenant was likely to prove a serious obstacle to his obtaining the main object of a young probationer's ambition—a kirk of his own. There happened to be a vacancy just then in the church of the neighbouring village of Craigfoot; and the committee who had the ordering of these matters appointed John Gillespie to preach there on two consecutive Sundays, in order that he, like his fellow probationers, might have a chance of obtaining a call from the congregation.

It was not an important charge, nor was the stipend a large one; but it was sufficient for the old man's modest ambition. He thought that if he could see his son minister of the little kirk at Craigfoot he could die content.

On the Saturday before John had to preach at Craigfoot, Mr. Gillespie left the shop in charge of his wife for an hour, and accompanied his son for part of the journey. There was no necessity to hire a conveyance, as the distance was only nine miles.

'John,' said the old man, when they had gone a mile or two on the way and it was nearly time for him to turn back, 'John, I have been thinking that it might be well for you to say nothing about the Covenanters at Craigfoot.'

The young man stood still in sheer surprise, and threw a strange look at his father; but his father kept his eyes bent on the ground and walked steadily on.

'It's from no want of respect for the persecuted remnant that I speak,' continued the old man; 'it's a mere matter of prudence. Folks are remarkin', John, that you should na harp sae much on ae string. There may be something in what they say.'

The speaker took a side glance at his companion. He was pale, and his lips were drawn in, with an expression there was no mistaking.

'Weel, I maun be turnin' hame,' said the old man, suddenly stopping. The minister stopped, and held out his hand.

'Good-day, father.'

'Good-day t'ye, John. Ye'll be hame on Monday?'

'Doubtless—if the Lord will.'

They parted, and the older man went homeward with down-bent head. He understood well that his son was censuring him in his heart for his worldly-wise counsel; and that nothing but respect for him as his father had sealed the young man's lips. And he could guess what sort of sermon the Craigfoot people would hear next day.

A few months after this Mr. and Mrs. Gillespie were sitting in the small room behind the shop that served for the family sitting-room. The shop was closed, for it was late; but they had no thought of going to bed. They were waiting for news. The election of a minister at Craigfoot was to take place that evening, and the Rev. John Gillespie was one of the candidates. There could be little doubt that he had much injured his chance of being called by the persistency with which he had appealed to the people to return to the purer and sterner religion of their fathers. But, on the other hand, he had won respect by his earnestness; he had the advantage of belonging to the neighbourhood; and his rival was no very formidable antagonist. There seemed a fair chance that John Gillespie would be called to Craigfoot. One of the Drumsynie people who had business in the little moorland village that day had kindly promised to wait there till the church meeting was over, and bring news of the result that same night.

So the two old folk waited, outwardly calm, but inwardly consumed with anxiety, their hearts beating at every footstep that passed their door.

Suddenly the door opened, and John himself entered. There was a strange gleam in his eyes.

'You've got the call, John!' cried his mother, clasping her hands together.

'No, mother. Mr. Thompson has been called by a large majority.'

The old lady let her hands fall in her lap. Then she covered her face and wept.

'What for do ye greet, mother?' asked her son, returning in his excitement to the homely word of his boyhood.

'I believe,' said old Gillespie, almost sternly, 'if you had taken my advice this would not have happened.'

The fire still gleamed in the young man's eyes.

'I know that weel, sir! Mr. Macfarlane told me I would certainly have got the call had I withheld my testimony. But is this a time, sir, when the wolves are preying on the flock, for the dogs to keep silent? "Woe to me if I preach not the gospel," said Paul. And woe to me if I cease to mind this people of the solemn Covenant they have neglected and despised!'

There was an air of solemnity in the young minister's face and manner that awed his father. The old man felt as if the mantle of the reformers had indeed descended upon the lad. He no longer felt grieved, much less angry.

'Whisht, mother,' said John, going up to his mother and laying his hand kindly on her shoulder. 'Think ye that the mothers of the martyrs lamented for their children? No; they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name. And if I suffer for the cause, though it were but as the bite of a flea in comparison, you too should rejoice.'

Mrs. Gillespie looked up at her son's face in a sort of wonder. It was to her eyes almost as though one of the old martyr-prophets had risen again. But, for all that, the mother cried herself to sleep that night.

III.

It was not long after this that a trivial incident gave John Gillespie and his mission an altogether new value in the eyes of the public.

Preaching on his usual subject one Sabbath afternoon in a large half-empty church in Glasgow, he attracted the attention of a reporter who happened to be one of the congregation. There was something in the young minister's palpitating yet subdued earnestness, his tones of genuine entreaty, his self-forgetfulness—something, too, in his appearance, his thin white face touched sometimes with a flush of colour that told of constitutional weakness, his long, coal-black hair, his gleaming eyes and unconventional gestures, that riveted the attention of the pressman. Half unconsciously he took out his notebook, and began to make a few jottings. Incidentally the preacher remarked that just two hundred years had elapsed since the obscure but gallant company of moorland shepherds had made their stand against tyranny in Church and State; and that it said but little for their descendants that the anniversary was being allowed to pass without remark. 'Had the principles of the Covenanters,' asked the minister, 'perished out of the land? Or was it mere forgetfulness that caused their children to appear wanting in the commonest gratitude?'

The reporter thought he saw his way to some good copy; and next day, to the intense surprise of the enthusiast, the *Herald* devoted three-quarters of a column to his sermon. Not only so, but a short editorial called attention to the subject, and, with a mixture of seriousness and badinage, exhorted the public to build the tombs of the prophets.

The idea 'caught on.' Meetings were held, speeches were delivered, and money was subscribed for memorial churches, memorial windows, and memorial stones.

Nor was it forgotten that the first man to remind his countrymen of the claims of the heroes and martyrs of old to loving remembrance was the Rev. John Gillespie. Invitations to preach showered in upon him. It was recognised on all sides that he had a mission, and that he was succeeding in his mission. Even the minister's father began to think that something better than Craigfoot might be in store for his son; and he remarked to his wife that the ways of Providence in respect of that painful dispensation might hereafter be fully justified.

Nor did it appear that the young minister was in any way puffed up by his sudden popularity. If anything he was more reserved, more earnest, more utterly oblivious of worldly considerations and the opinions of those around him, than he had been

before. He preached to a thousand well-dressed sinners with as little regard for their prejudices or their social position as if they had been so many handloom weavers. On one occasion he stopped the service because, on his giving out the psalm, the loud tones of an organ (which, he had understood, should be silent for the day) followed his voice. 'If the carnal instrument were not dumb,' he said, 'he would be dumb.' The congregation yielded and respected him none the less—but they smiled at each other behind their psalm-books.

And when the wave of popular enthusiasm began to ebb, when invitations to preach before wealthy congregations and learned professors no longer found their way to the little grocer's shop at Drumsynie, Gillespie's spirit showed no sign of a corresponding declension. He became bolder, more intent than ever, more passionately bent on turning men's hearts to the Covenant, and bringing to some good effect the popular excitement which had spread over the country.

Alas! men were getting tired of the subject. Few, very few, responded to his appeals. The minister's father saw, with terrible distinctness, that the tide had turned, and that his son, brave and gifted as he was, had not profited by it. He foresaw the approach of the day when John, his hope and his pride, would become that thing of popular scorn—a stickit minister. John, meanwhile, went on his way careless of all things but this—that he might be instant, in season and out of season, to bring men's minds back to the inheritance they were neglecting, to persuade them to take up and carry on the work of their fathers. He became ever more self-contained, more engrossed by his great idea, more oblivious of the world. His mother was anxious on the score of his health, for even in summer he did not quite lose a cough which had troubled him during the preceding winter. Old people, too, occasionally told him that he was overtaking his strength. But the young man only smiled gently, and quoted the text, 'As thy days are, so shall thy strength be.'

IV.

It happened that about four miles from Drumsynie, just on the border line between the cultivated fields and the wild moorland, was the site of one of those skirmishes which occasionally took place in the reign of James II. between the Covenanters and the king's troops. Such actions were rare, for the upholders of the

Covenant, though brave and determined men, were scattered over a wide extent of country, badly armed, and without leaders. It was not without pride, therefore, that the men of Drumsynie pointed out to strangers 'the battlefield' of Blackmoss.

During one of the solitary rambles which were his sole recreation, John Gillespie conceived the idea of turning to good account the local enthusiasm for the nameless heroes who had made the hectoring dragoons turn and flee. The two-hundredth anniversary of the action was not yet past. Why should he not summon his fellow-townsmen to meet him on the anniversary day on the battlefield, and there, above the bones of their dead champions, pledge themselves to uphold the cause for which they fought? The day fell on a Sunday—so much the better. The occasion would be more solemn; there would be less risk of the intrusion of worldly counsels.

For the next three weeks the young minister seemed a new creature. He could sleep but little; he could hardly spare time for eating. Late and early he was at work, writing letters of invitation, arranging the plan of proceedings, and composing the sermon which he was to deliver on the great occasion.

The ministers of Drumsynie looked upon the project with a doubtful eye. They feared that the excitement of the gathering would tend to unsettle their flocks; and they did not believe that any practical result would come of the demonstration. Still, they did not care to oppose the project; and they all 'intimated' from their pulpits the proposed meeting on the battlefield of Blackmoss.

The day arrived—the 21st of October. The hour of meeting had been fixed for two o'clock, so as to allow the Drumsynie people to attend church as usual before setting out.

No sooner did John Gillespie and his father reach home after the morning service than they started for Blackmoss. It was a bleak autumn day, with occasional showers of rain mixed with sleet.

'It's a bad day for the meeting, John,' remarked his father, as he cowered under his old umbrella.

'Nay, father,' replied the minister, 'what matters a puff of wind, a few drops of rain? Besides, the rough weather will serve to win the corn frae the chaff. Better a few earnest, God-fearing men than a great crowd of mere hangers-on. Were not two and thirty thousand, save three hundred, turned back, when the Lord wrought salvation by the hand of Gideon?'

When the father and son reached their destination, they found a crowd of five or six hundred people, chiefly young men and women, scattered over the reedy ground where the battle had been fought. A long row of gigs and dog-carts lined the moorland road. One or two ministers, conspicuous in their black clothes and white neck-cloths, were in the crowd, and they came forward to greet John Gillespie and his father.

'We had better begin,' said one of the ministers, 'else the farmers will be thinkin' their beasts may take cold.'

A stone, some four feet high, with a worn inscription, marked the precise spot on which, two hundred years before, the Covenanters had made their stand. A single iron rail, about two feet from the ground, guarded it from injury. To this stone the ministers, accompanied by William Gillespie and a few elders, made their way; and the senior minister present gave out a psalm. Naturally he selected that which, according to tradition, had been sung by the Covenanters on that very spot two centuries before, as they awaited, pike in hand, the charge of the dragoons:

In Judah's land God is well known,
His Name's in Israel great;
In Salem is His tabernacle,
In Zion is His seat.
There arrows of the bow He brake,
The shield, the sword, the war.
More glorious Thou than hills of prey,
More excellent art far.

As the strong, clear voices of the moorland folk swelled up into the wintry air, their hearts thrilled with the memory of the past. Here, where they stood, their forefathers had sung that battle-song, and fought as with ropes about their necks; over that rising ground yonder the proud Englishmen had come riding to cut down the heroic band. These brown moors and black peat-bogs had echoed the volleys of musketry, the crash of steel on steel, the shouts of triumph. It did not occur to any one there to ask whether the circumstances of the case justified an armed revolt. Nor did any remember the sour temper and impracticable tenets of the Covenanters. One sentiment filled the hearts of all present. They honoured the men who had made a stand against intolerable oppression. But, for John Gillespie, the political, the patriotic side of the question hardly existed. To him, the Covenanters were crusaders. Their cause was the cause of Christ. Their enemies were the soldiers of the Evil One. Men, looking

at the young minister as the psalm was sung, saw that his hands were clasped and his eyes tightly closed. He was in an ecstasy.

After the psalm a prayer was offered by the minister; and it was then time for John Gillespie to deliver his address. By common consent the post of honour was awarded to him, for he had been the moving spirit of the demonstration.

The young probationer began by offering a second prayer; then, giving his hat to one of the bystanders, he asked the people to accompany him in spirit to the scene which had been enacted there that day two hundred years ago. With true fervour he painted the distress and hardships of the Covenanters, the cruel penalties inflicted on them for the crime of worshipping God according to the dictates of their consciences, and the indomitable spirit which led them to meet for worship in lonely hollows among the hills, knowing well that the thumbscrew, the rack, and the gibbet might be the reward of their faithfulness. He then went on to speak of the meeting which had been held as on that day at Blackmoss. He pictured the approach of the troops, the hasty withdrawal of the women and children, the fruitless summons to surrender, the charge of the dragoons, the volleys with which the charge was met, the floundering of the horses in the boggy ground, the counter-charge of the Covenanters, and the flight of the enemy.

To all this the crowd listened with keen attention. The biting wind swept by them unheeded; even a few flakes of snow, the first heralds of winter, passed unnoticed.

But when the orator passed to the second part of his discourse, and dwelt on the signs of degeneracy that were to be seen on all hands, the interest of the audience began to fall off. When Mr. Gillespie asked in tones of passionate indignation what would have been the verdict of the Covenanters upon many of their social and religious customs; when he asked bitterly whether they were prepared to suffer, not only ignominy and persecution, but death itself, for the sake of the Covenant, he evoked no answering enthusiasm. A practised orator would have known from the wandering looks and restless movements of his hearers that he was tiring out their patience. But the young minister was too full of his subject to note these signs. He was intent on one thing—awakening the people to a sense of their backsliding, and inspiring them to pledge themselves to a renewal of the Covenant.

Alas! The more earnest he became, the more vigorously he upbraided, persuaded, and entreated, the more weary became the

people. They were tired of standing, chilled, and disheartened. Several of the farmers, whispering to each other that 'it never wad dae to let the beasts get a cauld,' slipped out of the crowd, mounted into their dogcarts, and drove away.

The senior minister, after vainly attempting a friendly interruption, beat a retreat, and one of his colleagues, after a few minutes, followed his example. By imperceptible degrees the crowd melted away, till only about a third of the original number, chiefly consisting of lads and young men, remained.

John Gillespie seemed to be unaware that his hearers were dispersing. Only when his voice began to fail him did he see fit to draw to a conclusion.

By this time a cold, drizzling rain was falling; but the speaker did not know it. He was prophesying the speedy triumph of the cause.

'Aye,' he said, 'from one end of Scotland to another the sound has gone forth. Men have heard it; they are hearkening. They are considering. Speedily they will come to the conclusion, as their fathers did, that these things must not be; that popery and prelacy must no longer stalk unabashed throughout the land; that the marks of Antichrist must be removed from amongst us. Soon our cities and chief towns shall see, as of old, gathering multitudes come together to swear allegiance to Christ and His Covenant. The blue banner shall yet be borne, as in former days, in the van of the Scottish hosts. Men will see and know that however the other nations of the earth may follow idols, we will be true to the God of Israel!

'And it is fitting, men of Blackmoss, that here, first of all, the ancient fervour should be renewed; the old vows repeated and confirmed. Here, where the servants of the Lord brought low the pride and the strength of carnal and bloody-minded men; here, where heroes shed their blood like water in defence of the truth, let us follow the example of our fathers, and renew their Covenant! Friends, take off your hats, raise your right hands to heaven, and repeat these words after me: "I promise and covenant with God and my fellow-countrymen, that I will do my utmost to root out of this land all so-called religion that is not in conformity with the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession of Faith."'

'Far too strong, brother,' whispered a voice in the speaker's ear.

John turned on him like a flash. It was a minister who had

spoken. Indignantly Gillespie looked round for the other two ministers, as if seeking their support. They were gone. He looked at the crowd. Not a hand was raised. Here and there a smile broke over a broad, good-natured face. John Gillespie turned very pale. He had to wait a few moments before he could proceed.

Meanwhile the rain had changed to sleet. Already it seemed to be growing dark. The people were moving about, impatient to be gone.

‘At least promise this!’ cried the reformer: “I promise and vow to God and my country that I will resist to the utmost the carnal innovations that are now creeping into the public worship in our churches, such as instrumental music, singing of uninspired hymns, the reading of sermons, and other like novelties.”

A few hands, those of the older men remaining, were lifted; a few voices murmured the pledge. But the majority of the crowd, seeing the poor array of hands raised, gave a short laugh.

‘And finally,’ continued Gillespie, ‘promise me solemnly, before God and each other, that you will follow the steps of your fathers in yet one other matter. Say, “I promise and vow that I will shun, and do my best to abolish, the ungodly and worldly amusements, such as were abhorred of the Covenanters—as fairs, drinking customs, games, and diversions.”’

This time not a hand was raised. There was an instant of silence. Then a shout of coarse laughter. The rowdy lads in the crowd, tired and out of temper, were delighted at the fiasco.

‘Ye’ll be the only Covenanter yersel’, Jock!’ cried a half-witted man in the audience; and again the young men laughed.

John Gillespie was trembling from head to foot, white to the lips with passion. It was not the personal insult that moved him, but the fact that the Covenant had been put before the this people and they had rejected it. It was to him as if with his own ears he had heard them shout for Barabbas.

‘Woe unto you!’ he cried, turning on them in his wrath. ‘Woe unto you, ye sons of Kedar. Sons of Kedar, do I say? Sons of Belial I might call you! For you have heard the truth, and you have not received it. *You*, the sons of the Covenanters! Nay! ye have no part or lot with them. Ye are on the broad and wide road that leadeth to destruction; ye——’

Here the young minister was forced to stop, for some unmannerly fellows on the outskirts of the crowd began crushing against those before them, so that those nearest to the speaker

were, against their will, forced close upon him. Gillespie angrily remonstrated; his remonstrances were met with indignant denials. The lads on the outside, enjoying the fun, pushed harder, and began to laugh and jeer at the disowned leader. The rain and sleet fell faster.

It was over.

John's father got his son's hat, forced it upon his head, linked John's arm in his own, and led him away.

The wind was in their faces; and neither felt inclined for talk. Only, as they neared home, William Gillespie said gently—
'I doot the time for the Covenant's gone by, John.'

John looked quickly up at his father, but said nothing.

That evening the young minister was feverish and restless. His skin burned; he could neither read nor think coherently.

About ten o'clock he rose to go out—declared that he wanted air; but his mother persuaded him to go to bed. Then she brought him a hot drink, and tucked the blankets round his neck as she had done twenty years before. He lay still and passive as a child.

Next morning John did not come down to breakfast, and his father went up to call him. In a few seconds the old man came back with white, scared face.

'Grace,' he said, 'I doot something's come over John. He's no there, an'——'

He stopped, and sank into a chair, for a great fear lay at his heart.

The old people asked everywhere, but no one had seen their son; no one could give any tidings of him.

'The lad's fair cracked about thae auld-wairld Whigs and Covenanters, as they ca' them,' said Thomas Mucklewham, the presbyter, to his neighbour Andrew Wilson. 'I doot the puir chiel's no' a' there. But the auld man's clean dumbfounded. It behoves us to seek for the callant.'

Before noon a score of people were scattered over the countryside, searching for the missing man.

It was late in the afternoon before they found him. The minister was lying on the battlefield, dead, close to the memorial stone; one of his hands was touching it. His head was bare, and the snow lay in patches on his black raiment. They lifted him in silence, and carried him home to the woman that bore him.

Since that day there has been no anniversary sermon at Blackness. It is not likely that there will ever be another.

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THE PLACE OF THE SACRED BO-TREE.

PLEASE you to mount the carpet and travel backwards through a matter of two thousand years. It is our will that you land upon the Dagoba of Thuparamaya, the relic-shrine built by a devout king in his city of Anuradhapura to contain the collar-bone of Buddha.

Behold the city spread beneath you—a great place of palaces and temples, of red-brick houses of the wealthy set amid fruit gardens, of squares bedecked with elephants and bulls in stone, of wide long streets lined with the bazaars, of narrow alleys squalid with Eastern garbage and naked children. Behold this city—fifty-two miles around its ring, sixteen miles across from gate to gate. Remember that mushroom London has yet to crawl forth from the forests and swamps which flank the Thames; and that amongst the hills where Edinburgh is to arise, a prowling savage hunts the beasts with a stone-shod mace. Realise that you are gazing down upon Anuradhapura of Ceylon in the height of its fame, and with the mists of twenty centuries brushed away.

The air is clear as nothingness, rich but blue overhead, and the colours which paint the city come to you vivid and undiminished. You glance over the whole wide ring of the boundary walls and remember that within them are penned three millions of human beings. You see them on the housetops, in the gardens, in the streets, and you hear the hum of them from the doorways and through the shuttered windows. The streets squirm like tortured snakes amongst the houses, divorced as far as may be from any cramped rectangular plan; the houses are built with infinite variety of form and colour; the dust rises in faint brown clouds from the feet of the traffic.

It is a city of processions, and every street has its cavalcade. A lady of the harem rides by in her shuttered palanquin, and the bearer-coolies shout to clear the crowd. A pearl-captain with a little leathern pouch follows, surrounded by his crew well armed, carrying the spoils of a year to the merchant who employs him. A religious procession of a thousand pilgrims and a score of ochre-robed priests treads on their heels. Then come more coolies with bales of silks from India-across-the-water, and bronze sword-blades, and wood for the lance-shaft sellers in the bazaar. The striped

awnings above reach half-way across the street, and under them the hard red brick of the houses gives out the heat soaked in through many centuries. But the units of the great city never rest. They are no worn-out race of Orientals. They are a people in their prime—they are full of a huckstering feverish energy.

In the main street of the city, a gorgeous thoroughfare of ten thousand houses, a little storm arises. A naked thief has pilfered from one of the merchant's stores displayed under a cavernous archway. A servant runs out to seize him, and the fellow struggles. Blood is shed. A guard of armed men presses up through the gathering crowds—clanking, stalwart, upright. They seize the thief, words are spoken, and the thief ceases to exist as an entire man. Then they take money from the merchant and depart to the place from which they came, leaving behind them a battered corpse in the roadway. The gaunt dogs are already beginning to arrive from down the alleys, and the carrion fowl collect above the housetops. It is an incident not uncommon. There are three millions of people in the city, and order must be kept.

A swarthy, reckless-looking fellow rolls up the street, kicks one of the parish dogs out of his way, and proceeds to do business with the merchant who has just been despoiled. He wears a purple rag round his neck, battered armour on his trunk, and a broad axe slung by a thong to his wrist. He has got so thoroughly used to danger of every conceivable sort that ten minutes of assured safety would unnerve him. He is mariner, peddler, pirate—the last always when occasion serves. His home is in the distant sea-port of Tyre, in the little-known northern sea. He has brought with him a tiny cargo of dye-stuffs for disposal, and habit makes him plant his back against the wall and grip the axe-handle as he barbers.

Another religious procession with densely filled ranks surges by and blots the Tyrian and the merchant from view. This one goes to a temple, and the yellow-clad priests chant, and butter-fires flicker in the gloom before the image of the god. Buddha is great, and his worshippers devout. Throughout all the days of the year and through all the nights they cease not in their prayers and praises. The rest of the city may sleep, but not the priests. When one tires, another takes his place; and when one dies, a novice joins the priesthood. The man who scoffs at religion is a man yet to be born long centuries hence.

But the people are not without their lighter moments. In the squares and in the public gardens are platforms on which men and women dance and posture, and trained animals show their tricks, and jugglers make a mango tree grow out of a seed, or throw a rope into the air and climb up it and disappear into nothingness. There are feastings too, and races, fights with the knuckle-duster and tricks on the balanced pole; and those who come to watch, and those who stay to feast, pay in kind or coin according to what they get and according to their means.

There are baths, too, which are places for luxury and rest. They are placed in every ward of the city and are built for every caste and grade. There are baths built of marble and baths of homely granite. There are private baths in the houses of the king's brothers of burnished gold and ivory.

And over all, the soldiery of the king keep guard and order.

The king! Yes, a real king; a monarch such as has ceased to exist for many a weary century, and who lives in a palace appropriate to his state. You that stand on the high dome of the Dagoba of Thuparamaya, behold! This royal dwelling is built in a square, with sides 230 feet in length, and the uppermost storey is the ninth above the ground. On every floor there are a hundred rooms, and in every room four windows filled in with gilded trellis. Above all is a thing which one believed to exist only in the *Arabian Nights Entertainment*—a roof of polished brass. See the winking splendour of it under the blaze of sky, and guess at a millionth of the things that have passed beneath its shelter!

There is a procession of howdahed elephants coming up this moment—huge fellows without tusks, who plod on entirely careless of the crowds which scuttle from their path. A glittering squadron of cavalry attends them, and the banners tell that the pageant is made to escort in a visiting king from his halting-place without the city walls. The great bronze doors open, and he passes into the palace, and the doors clash behind him as they have closed on the heels of mightier than he. Hiram of Tyre (in earlier days) has sent an embassy to that palace, and with him was a hook-nosed man who took back word to Jerusalem of 'apes and peacocks,' and excited a new avarice in blasé Solomon.

Dynasties might change—had changed—but that palace with its glitter of roof was destined to endure down eight centuries, and to house a king who was a real king. It was always the king who did everything, whose will was the people's law. One built

palaces, another bazars; one spent his life in war, and another in breeding peacocks. King Prakrama it was who, for the better water-supply of his country, caused 1,470 tanks to be constructed, which were to be known as the 'seas of Prakrama' all down through the ages. But Oevenipiatissa the King (of 307 B.C.) was the most renowned of all, for he it was who set up the cult of Buddha, as the national worship, and who planted the sacred Bo-tree (288 B.C.)

The tree was started as a trivial budding slip. They brought it to him from far without his city of Anuradhapura, in a great procession which gathered pomp and numbers as it advanced. It was a cutting from the tree under which Gautama had become Buddha—a thing of indescribable holiness—a gift more precious than all the king's possessions. He honoured it fittingly. He built a temple of red brick for its attendant priests, and in the walled courtyard of the temple, on a triple platform of cunning architecture, they planted the little switch of wood.

The tree grew, looking like a banyan with branches which did not root, and it put forth heart-shaped leaves with long, attenuated points. The folk from India-across-the-water who came to do pilgrimage there called it Pipal; but the men who came in later years, after the manner of their islands, called the tree a sacred fig, or, when they wanted to be pedantic, wrote it as *Ficus religiosa*.

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And now, you who read this, step from the carpet which has held you back fifteen centuries in the past, and look at Anuradhapura as it is in the current year of grace. You will see some evidences of those old scenes still around you; and for the rest you must wade through the 'Mahâwansa,' which is a metrical 'Baedeker' written in the Pali tongue.

The city has fallen upon evil times, and the decay of age has gripped all her bones. The king and his three millions of subjects are not, and the fierce-growing Singhalese flora has invaded even the sanctity of the temples. The great houses and bazaars are mouldering rubbish-heaps. The stone bulls and elephants peer from amid scrub that is hung with orchids. The king's palace itself shows only a bristling forest of sixteen hundred granite columns sprouting out from a wilderness of rubble. Of the great brass roof, who shall say into what melting-pots the plates of that have found a way?

The forest is the chief holder of the city now. Trees girdle the fallen images, and smother from sight the domes of the huge relic-shrines. Shrubs have levered down a milliard milliard bricks; rank jungle-plants have burst up the tooled stone causeways. But man has never lost entire touch with the place, and to-day he is regaining possession. A squalid native village has always huddled amid the centre of the ruins, and this is now beginning to glow with a newer life. The agents of the Crown Colony of Ceylon have it in hand. The great tank of Kalawewa, which for centuries had been a ruin, was in 1888 repaired after years of labour, and once more Anuradhapura has water flowing through her ducts. There is a Government rest-house, a British magistrate to punish the evil-doer, and police to spread the law of the land. On clear nights one can hear the scream of the locomotive whistle from the terminus at Matale. The age is utilitarian. Even dead Pharaoh is hustled from his grave to become a spectacle.

But one thing in Anuradhapura has not changed through all the weariness of time, and has not bent to heathen conqueror or bowed to that greater Vandal, the civilisation of the West. The temple of the sacred Bo-tree still remains, an oasis tilled by religion. The brick of the courtyard walls maintains its blush; the priests are in the same ochre-coloured robes; the tree bears leaves to a line the same as those it bore when King Oevenipiatissa sat on his throne of gold and ivory and precious gems. The peacocks are there too, as they always have been, to lend colour to the place with their living jewellery.

Only once in all its life of over two thousand years have the newer gods frowned on the tree, and that was in the October of 1887. Then it was that they sent a great storm and splintered off the main stem and threw it to the litter of the courtyard. The yellow-clothed priests with sorrow took the wood and cremated it with vast and mournful ceremony, and the cult of the surviving branches continues.

The tree now is hoary with years, and rests feebly on its crutched sticks, and is bound about the middle with many a girdle; but its heart-shaped leaves are as fresh as those it bore in that far mysterious past, and never for an instant do they rest. Unceasingly they circle and dance and quiver before the little monkeys on the wall, and the yellow-robed priests of the temple, and the tired pilgrims who do obeisance in the courtyard. They are never cut, never shaken; but when they fall to the ground, then



THE PLACE OF THE SACRED BO-TREE. 171

the devout take them as holy relics, and give what is due to the priests of the temple.

This is the year of our Lord 1895, and the Buddhist pilgrims have done reverence to every leaf which has fallen from that tree since 288 years before His birth. We know that the heathen is an erring man who bows down to wood and stone, but we do not always realise that his constancy is a thing we cannot match.

Two thousand one hundred and eighty-three years—one tree—one religion; think the matter out. It may bring understanding to other things which lie within that smiling, haggard, mysterious East.

THANKSGIVING AT THE FARM.

JOSIAH STARN had just finished a large and pleasing breakfast of buckwheat cakes and Jersey sausage—his own killing of pigs, his own risin' of buckwheat—and as, seated on tilted chair, he drew long whiffs from his corn-cob pipe, he allowed that Thanksgiving Day had opened well at Conshehochan Farm.

While he smoked, Catherine Ann, the wife, cleared away the breakfast things in rapid but absent-minded fashion. She had something to say to Josiah, but was puzzled as to how that something should be said. When the last crumbs had been swept up and the tablecloth put away against dinner-time, she broke her long silence with, 'Coming to service this mornin', ain't you, Josiah?'

A cloud heavier than tobacco-smoke settled on the farmer's face.

'I reckon no, Catherine Ann—not tu-day; no, not tu-day.'

'And why not, Josiah?' queried Catherine Ann, who crossed the room to where he sat, and flicked a bit of hay off his broad shoulder.

'Well, Catherine Ann, it's just this. I've got a feelin' as I'd like to spend this mornin' alone with Natur'. I warn't brought up strict-like in Church matters, as you was, and somehow I've of opinion I do a better thanksgiving out in the woods, thinkin' in my own quar way, figuring up all the Lord hez done for the farm and me during the past year. You and the children go to meetin'; I'll just meander 'bout and turn up at dinner-time.'

A look of disappointment settled on the woman's face as she replied: 'As you please, Josiah; don't get back later than two o'clock.' Then she left the room to get herself and the seven little Starns ready for meeting.

An hour later Josiah, from the kitchen-window, watched his family tramping churchward, and when the last of them had disappeared within the Methodist meeting-house, he turned and glanced up at the old clock.

'Golly! Why, it's half-past ten. I'll have to git a move on, or I'll be late.'

Five minutes later Josiah Starn was hurrying down the lane which led from his farm to the shore of Coon Lake. Ten minutes'

walk brought him to the lake and into the presence of four old friends, who were evidently waiting for him. These friends were Jake Holmes, Isaac Scattergood, Matthew Simpson, and Paul Jenkins. A large flat-bottomed scow was floating by the small landing-stage, and into this homely craft the five men hurried, pulling the boat out to the centre of the lake, at least half a mile from shore.

From the moment of meeting until the anchor was dropped the only words uttered had been a 'Morning, friend,' passed from man to man in most perfunctory manner. Soon, however, their tongues began to wag.

'Rig the table,' said Josiah Starn.

'Don't you boys feel the awful wetness of all this d——d water?' slyly suggested Paul Jenkins, a man whose gigantic frame suggested that its tenant was little affected by climatic conditions.

'Well spoke,' put in the clerical-looking party who answered to the name of Isaac Scattergood; 'draw that cork, Matthew; we'll liquor up as a starter.'

Five cheerful gurgles, five reluctant sweeps of as many rough hands over moist lips, followed, and then Jack Holmes, a man who, when he began to speak, always made you think of Moody and Sankey, pulled out a pack of cards; two minutes later the five old farmers were 'communin' with Nature,' that is, hard at work playing a stiff game of draw poker.

Coon Lake was hemmed in on all sides by a heavy growth of pines, and so the old boat floating on its surface was exposed to no disturbing wind. Indian summer, too, had taken all the chill out of the clear November air, and far above, from out of a cloudless sky, the sun shone down with a suspicious touch of kindliness and sympathy on the little party of gamblers. And small wonder. The sun had looked upon many a less inviting picture. For the Thanksgiving party on Coon Lake was a jolly one. Smiles danced across wrinkled faces; laughter deep and husky came free and often; occasionally a hat was tossed high in the air as some bit of good luck kindled farmer enthusiasm. For as the spirit-line fell in the bottle of Jersey-lightning, it rose proportionately in the frames of the Jersey farmers: and soon the game waxed fast and furious.

But all happy times have their end, and two o'clock grew painfully near. Josiah Starn had been playing from the start in bad luck, his pile of silver dollars was low. The evangelical-faced

Holmes was likewise out of ducketts; while Matthew Simpson, who seemed to have studied up the game since their last meeting a year ago, had scooped in about all the money at the table.

'Last pot,' cried somebody, as Matthew Simpson shook the papers around. Nobody seemed particularly pleased with their cards. Josiah Starn, however, was conscious of a sharp 'hunch,' and that 'hunch' had always, in times past, meant big and sudden luck for Josiah. He took the hint of the fairy, and held up a four, five, and seven of diamonds, drawing two cards.

Scattergood modestly confessed he already held three aces; he'd take two cards, kings preferred.

Holmes 'allowed he'd be d——d if he wouldn't buck agin Providence and old Scattergood by drawing four cards to an ace.'

Paul Jenkins said—and he spoke with considerable feeling—'that on any day in the year but Thanksgiving he'd just lay down his five cards and swear, but, being as it was Thanksgiving, he'd buy a card and try to fill a wall-eyed straight.'

Matthew Simpson 'called the boys to witness that he'd always stood pat on the last hand in the last Jack-pot on Thanksgiving Day. He'd got too old to make any new rules, and so he'd take his chances with the papers he now held.'

There was a moment of silence after the draw, as each man skinned his cards and tried his hardest to look disappointed.

Josiah Starn opened the betting. 'I've got nothin',' he plaintively remarked, 'but five cards of doubtful value. But as a neighbourly act I'll start the music for two dollars.'

Paul Jenkins then said 'he'd been a ass' not to follow his first idea, and swear before he paid a dollar to draw cards, as swearing was all he could do now. He dropped out.

Scattergood, who had frankly confessed to three aces before the draw, now complacently observed, 'I caught that pair of kings, and the least I can do, sitting behind an ace-full, is to see Josiah Starn's two dollars and rise him a cool ten.'

Holmes, who hadn't done much talking before the draw, now merely said 'D——n,' and threw down his cards.

It was Matthew Simpson's turn to speak now—Simpson, the man who had stood 'pat' because that was his rule. Josiah Starn and Isaac Scattergood, the only men left in the game, eyed Matthew Simpson suspiciously as he toyed with his cards, and seemed in doubt whether to bet or throw them in the discard. At last he came to a decision, and, speaking very slowly, said,

'Boys, we are all old friends, and this is a day of thanksgiving. I'd orter put this hand down—drop it sudden. That would be good poker. But I ain't playing poker just now, I'm playing friends. I don't like to quit a head, and so to distribute my winnings I'm agoin' to see Starn's two dollars, Scattergood's ten dollars, and tip the pot a cool one hundred.'

Once more it was Josiah Starn's turn to speak. An expression which told of deep feeling, but a perfect resignation to the inevitable, brightened, if it did not beautify, his rugged features. And as he spoke his old friends were conscious of a new dignity in his words and tones. 'Boys,' he began, 'I've long been thinking of giving up farming and turning missionary. And when I devote myself entirely to my fellow-men I ain't goin' to want no kind of property to worry about. Now this particular hand, in this yer particular game, on this particular pious day, gives me a chance to dis-tri-bute all I've got to my best friends in a way that won't make 'em feel it charity I gives. A follerin' this idea up I'm going to do a bluff. There's Scattergood's rise of ten dollars, that uses up all the silver I've got left; Simpson, you've always said them two Alderney cows of mine would be dog-cheap at one hundred dollars. My old sorrel horse, Tom, with cart and harness, is good for, say, sixty dollars; the brindle sow and her seven sucking pigs is good any day for twenty-five dollars; then there's three ploughs and a new harrow—well, let them go for twenty-five dollars more.'

Josiah, as he spoke, put all these items down on a piece of paper, added up the total, and then continued: 'Them goods and chattels figures up two hundred and ten dollars, and here they all goes into this distribution-pot. That sees your rise of one hundred dollars, Simpson, and lifts the pot about one hundred and ten more.'

Scattergood read the due bill over carefully, fingered the money a bit nervously, and at last remarked, 'Two hundred and ten dollars to call? That's kinda steep! My ace-full ain't got no chance. It will be Simpson's money, sure. But Simpson's cut out for a rich man; I ain't. He'll get all my money sooner or later, and to make it sooner I'll call. I'm out of coin, but the potato-crop on my forty-acre field is good for at least two hundred and ten.' And Scattergood scribbled on an old card, 'Sold my potato-crop on forty-acre lot for two hundred and ten dollars;

received payment in full.—Isaac Scattergood.' This due bill he placed reluctantly in the pot.

Matthew Simpson said 'he'd call that rise of Josiah Starn's by putting up sixty dollars in cash, and a due bill for his Hamiltonian colt, worth fifty dollars.' And then he turned to Scattergood, and asked, 'What can you show, boy; I know you've been lying about that ace-full.'

'I display four queens,' calmly stated Scattergood.

'No good,' came quickly from Matthew Simpson. 'Four aces here;' and then he made a move as if to draw in the pot, but checking himself, as a matter of idle form, he asked the thoughtful Josiah Starn, 'Anything to say, Josiah, before we close the game?'

Josiah passed his hand across his eyes as if trying to bring his mind back from a long, long wander. 'Anything to say? What have I got? Not much, I reckon, but let me take another look.' Carefully he slipped the cards one over the other. 'Boys, it's nothing short of a downright miracle. Durn't if I hain't caught a straight flush. Seems as how the Lord didn't mean I should drop farming after all.' And then Josiah, after spreading his cards on the table, proceeded to draw in the Jack-pot. The silver filled two of his capacious pockets. This deposited in safety, he picked up the crop of potatoes from the forty acres of land; a Hamiltonian colt, thirteen hands high, warranted sound in wind and limb; two cows; one horse, cart, and harness; two ploughs and a harrow; and one sow and seven sucking pigs. Tucking this miscellaneous group into his waistcoat-pocket, he stood up, stretched himself, and said, 'Two o'clock, neighbours; we must pull in to the shore. I've promised to turn up at home for dinner. We'll have another go at this game next Thanksgiving.'

Catherine Ann Starn, looking anxiously from the kitchen-window, caught sight of Josiah five minutes before he reached home, and when the 'Nature-loving' farmer arrived he found dinner on the table, and seven hungry little 'Starns' all in their places ready to despatch a meal that had been slowly filtering into their stomachs, through their nostrils, for at least half an hour.

'A bit late you are, Josiah; come along!' briskly exclaimed Catherine Ann.

'Sorry, mother, but you know when I gets communin' with Nature I'm apt to forget the passage of time'; and with this gentle

but genial lie Josiah dropped into his armchair at the head of the table.

Catherine Ann, from behind the great turkey, looked at him interrogatingly for a moment, and then, in rather sharp tones, asked, 'Have you forgot all about saying grace?'

'Of course, of course.' And Josiah, with hand reverently held aloft, and in a voice trembling with emotion, said: 'For what we have received this day—received this day, O Lord! make us truly, truly, truly thankful.' When Josiah opened his eyes at the close of this thanksgiving he was startled to note that Catherine Ann was regarding him in the most peculiar manner; an expression rested on her face he had never seen there before. She wasn't angry—that he could see at once; on the contrary, she looked happier than she had looked since the day they were married. But she didn't volunteer any explanation as to the cause of her joy, and Josiah had been a married man too long to ask questions. Josiah noted, however, when his plate of turkey came round that he had been given a double helping of onion-and-bread stuffing—one of his weaknesses. Now in general Catherine Ann was rather close with her onion-and-bread stuffing: first, because it was so useful in making up dishes for the rest of the week; second, when Josiah ate two helpings of stuffing he always kicked at night, and Catherine Ann had got over being young years and years ago. Josiah noted this sign of popularity with the old lady, smiled in acknowledgment, but discreetly held his tongue. Catherine Ann's good-humour naturally put the whole party in happy mood, and Thanksgiving dinner was unanimously voted a grand success.

When the plum-pudding and mince-pies had all disappeared, and the children turned into the kitchen, where their chatter would not disturb Josiah, Catherine Ann came over to where her old man was sitting, and, bending down, kissed him, whispering as she did so, 'You've made me very happy to-day, Josiah; and very, very proud of you am I this Thanksgiving night.'

'How's that, Catherine Ann?'

'I've never done you justice,' continued his wife. 'Somehow I never could believe you had the true religious spirit. But no man without that spirit could have put the 'unction and the fer-ver you did into your grace to-night. Forgive me, Josiah, for my hasty judgment. I did you a injustice.'

Josiah placed his big right hand over his eyes, as if in prayer.

But he wasn't praying ; he was thinking—thinking of Coon Lake and that straight flush. At last he broke out, ' Jumping at conclusions is allus resky business, Catherine Ann.'

' I know it is, Josiah, and I won't do you a onjustice again ' ; and then Catherine Ann hurried off to quell a disturbance which had evidently broken out among the little Starns. As she passed out of sight Josiah, with a broad grin on his homely face, muttered, ' There's two ways of taking that last speech of mine 'bout jumping at conclusions ; Catherine Ann—God bless the old girl!—has taken it the right way. I'll buy her that ten-dollar Bible, with pictures with all the 'postals and prophets in it, next time I go to town, and, d—— me, if I ever play poker ag—— !'

But here Josiah Starn stopped talking, and began to snore in good old farmer fashion.

THE LAND OF THE BANDIT.

ONE should approach Ajaccio in the fag-end of a gale to be fitly impressed by an introduction to Corsica and the Corsicans. Moreover, the gale must be from the south-west, so that it may chevy the waves from the quays of the town with right good will. You will then see nothing of the hinder mountains, which are the glory of the place. A thick grey brume, darkening to black, will be heavy on the hills and slopes, and from out of it on both sides the slate-coloured lines of the shore may be seen sprawling towards the water, with faint pencillings of an intense green. The white dots dispersed amid the green are sepulchres.

For my part, in future I will stay aboard rather than go into the strife of a getting ashore with the weather in such a plight. It is nothing less than a demoniacal scene. The heavy swell dashes the crowd of ferries one upon the other, and all against the ship's side; the Ajacciot boatmen scream and threaten each other, and grab with rude hands at the legs or arms of the passengers descending the ladder at the peril of their lives; the ship's officers menace the ferrymen with pains and penalties of an indefinite kind if they do not keep aloof; the lady passengers are only deterred from swooning with terror by an overmastering anxiety about their skirts and the disposition of their various packages and bags. It is a toss-up whether one is to be drowned or crushed to death between one barque and another; and now and again a big wave glides into the middle of the hurlyburly, and gives boatmen, ship's officers, and passengers a hearty douche from head to foot.

Late in the evening, after a meal of trout at the Hôtel de France, I strolled up and down the granite quayside in the teeth of the hurricane, which had revived. The flying spume of the waves lit the water like dull lamps. Suddenly there was a cry from the far end of the pier. A woman came rushing along with words that soon gathered many Ajacciots around her. 'Where is he?' they asked. 'Come,' said she, 'and you, too, will see it, *Dio mio!*' We followed her to a sheltered nook, where the back wash of the sea eddied gloomily to and fro between an angle of the quay and the pier, and at her bidding we stared hard into the dark Stygian pool. For a moment there was nothing to see

save the agitated sliding of the water. Then a pallid face shone out at us, like the reflection of a veiled moon, and a tumult of shouts broke forth.

For aught I know, this poor drowned soul was one of my fellow-passengers from Africa sacrificed to the fury of the Ajacciot boatmen. We did not recover him, though an hour was spent with ropes and torches in the effort. Twice or thrice the dead face glided to our feet, and seemed to look at us reproachfully, but the current quickly carried it off again. The women were hard set to keep one stout-hearted fellow from diving, clothes and all, into the water to its rescue. They adjured him, for his family's sake, to forbear, and clutched him by the arm; nor were they frightened by the curses with which he rewarded them. At length, however, it seemed futile to tarry, and the drowned man was left at the mercy of the sea. The journal of the following day made a note of the incident, hard by its paragraph celebrating the capture of the bandit Calzaroni, 'who has put the police at defiance since 1883 for a murder with which he is charged.'

Ajaccio is a town of high, small-windowed houses and much grime. It would smell very foul if the smoke of the herby brushwood from the mountains, which the Ajacciots use for their fires, did not sweeten the air. Of course it is not all like this, but the characteristic part of it is. Its boulevards and new thoroughfares are as Parisian as French contractors can make them, and, though clean and bright enough, seem out of touch with the dark faces, dark velvet jackets and dark history of native Corsica. Bonaparte's stern countenance harmonises better with the place.

The house where Napoleon was born is not nearly as pleasant as his house of captivity in Elba. Nowadays, of course, its glory, if it ever possessed any, has completely vanished. It is a tall building, with a trivial little patch of greenery in front of it, railed in, and looking as depressed as a London city graveyard. The faded gilt eagle upon a stave in this rusty garden seems a mocking indication. There is, further, a brief inscription upon the wall, telling of the custodian who, for a franc or so, will fetch the key and show the house. *Sic transit*, &c. However, it will never do to be even philosophically lachrymose in the presence of the portly dame who proves to be the custodian in question. She has the air of one with good store of francs; and well she may have, for the visitors hither are so many thousands per year, with

now and then a crowned head or the president of a republic among them. Yet her office is no sinecure; she laments the lateness of the hour at which certain of the steamers travelling between France and Algeria call for a brief interval at Ajaccio. Sometimes it is ten o'clock when they arrive; sometimes twelve or one o'clock. But, whatever the time, the rat-tat-tat duly sounds at the door, and voices disturb the silence of the night, demanding to be shown the Great Napoleon's house.

One must walk through these rooms of the flat occupied by Carlo Bonaparte (Napoleon's father) with a good stock of faith and imagination if one wishes to come profitably out of the expedition. I suppose about a tenth of the custodian's tales may be true. She declares the chairs with the faded and worn yellow silk seats and broken backs are veritably Bonaparte furniture; and that Napoleon himself, as a child, tumbled and played upon this or that disembowelled sofa. The pretty little cabinet in the chamber called Napoleon's study is vouched for as the one upon which he wrote his school exercises as a boy. His bedroom (some twelve feet square, floored with red tiles) contains an aged four-poster, three ragged armchairs, a mirror, and an old mahogany chest of drawers. In this room the other year, when the President of France was in Ajaccio, the journalists of Paris passed many hours, night and day, writing inspired articles. The sedan-chair is shown in which Madame Letitia, the mother, used to journey to Mass, and in which they carried her home from church one day that she might give birth to Napoleon himself. It is a worm-eaten relic, with the leather peeling off it. The bedstead itself, upon which Napoleon entered the world, stands rude and dislocated by the wall. In the reception-room of the suite there may be a faint echo of the music and prattle and shuffling of cards which went on there a century ago. But one must tarry awhile to catch it. The tuneless spinet and the mirrors and chairs now peopling the chamber, like ineffectual ghosts, do not help one very much.

Spite of the tales that are told about him as a child, one may assume that Napoleon was but a commonplace little boy when he trod these boards and flags. We know that he objected strongly to the water with which the priest baptized him, and we know that he had a temper of his own. But for the most part it is futile to prattle about the childish traits which foretold the man of infinite ambition and success in the after time. There is not

much historical backbone in material of this kind. Nine Ajacciots of every ten in the present day know full well that if they had Napoleon's chances they would go as far as he went. Their demeanour betrays them. It is the *ne plus ultra* of pride and self-reliance. One would have liked to have heard what Ajaccio said of Napoleon when the news of Waterloo and St. Helena reached them. Other Corsicans besides Pozzo di Borgo had ere then formed a mean opinion of their great countryman.

Nothing is so suggestive of the character of the Corsican as his manner of burial. In the suburbs of continental cities you find sunny little taverns or vine-bowered retreats for the drinking of wine. Here you discover nothing but tombs. The Corsican will not, if he has but an acre or two of landed estate, lie in a cemetery like a continental. It is for his executor to inter him in a corner of the property or in the middle of it, and build a little domed chapel over his remains. Perhaps two or three cypresses are planted round about him, or the vines are trailed to form a shady arbour by the wall. I have seen onions and potatoes growing in excellent rows close to the right of the sepulchre. What does it matter? The dead man cannot hurt the crops, nor is it so very barbaric to eat the grapes which hang their clusters over his body. To these little wayside or field tombs the friends of the deceased, if they love him, come periodically to pray for his repose or to seek fresh stimulus in vendetta.

Some think that the vendetta is now little more than a legend in Corsica. It is quite otherwise. The police reckon the number of bandits in the forests by hundreds. Since the Franco-German war lawlessness has increased by great strides in the island. From the magistrates down to the peasants, all find it to their profit to run a tilt against the immaculate figure of ideal justice. The man who pays his taxes or any other dues must be either very rich or very simple. The wronged Corsican who trusts to the law to right him so as to satisfy his own exacting proud heart is sure to be disappointed. Killing is still less of a crime here than anywhere else in the world, and the doctrine of blood for blood is taught to babes. Not long ago, a Corsican priest of the Catholic faith, in a complimentary address to President Carnot, used the phrase having 'hatred in the heart' as if it were a virtue to hate. In truth it is so in Corsica. The man who has no feud with another is reckoned but a pitiful fellow. He is regarded as a friendless man would be regarded elsewhere.

This needs a little understanding. Not every visitor who spends a week or two in the Island, staying in hotels, conversing only with those who talk hybrid English or French, the official language, and travelling only upon the national roads by railway or postal diligence, can get at the root of the matter, or even see much of the stem that grows from the root. What if four peasants out of five that one meets in the country have a gun resting upon their left forearm and shoulder, ready to swing to guard at a moment's warning? It is for the game, no doubt, and equally without doubt each man has a licence to carry arms? Not a bit of it. In 1886 only 335 persons in all the island took out a permit to shoot game, and 13,000 or 14,000 sportsmen were abroad in the bush. Their quarry, however, was and is of different kinds. Some are concerned only with men, and you may thank your stars when you meet them that you are not on their list. It is not without good cause that the Corsican gendarme is allowed to reckon his time of service in Corsica as so much active service in the field. He has his work cut out for him here among the dense scrub of herbs, heath grown to trees, myrtle, lentisk, and brambles, where the mountains spring abruptly, and among the snow-peaks guarded by precipices and narrow defiles, and pierced with caverns, the secret of which is kept tenaciously by one generation of bandits after another. All the time he is afoot in the scrub it is as if he were upon a battlefield; but with this distinction, that here his enemies are better able to take him unawares. A right and left shot from a double-barrelled Lefauchaux may lay two gendarmes dead in one minute, and their bodies will rest for many an hour where they have fallen.

Some of my readers will have heard of the bandits Bellacoscia, who reside at their ease in the picturesque gorge of Pintica, on the side of Monte d'Oro, above the town of Bocagnano, some twenty-five miles from Ajaccio. They have lived here since 1850, and always in defiance of the law. Their history is interesting, if only because it tells us how powerless France has shown herself to suppress the Corsican scourge of banditism.

So long ago as 1848 Antonio, the elder of the two brothers who carry the nickname of Bellacoscia (literally 'a fine leg,' which they have so often shown to the pursuit of the law), committed his first blood-crime. He shot the mayor of his commune because the honest man refused him a false certificate of exemption from

military service, and, further, demanded rent and taxes from him as a settler upon communal land.

This murder did not disturb Antonio's peace of mind very much. He did not even let it interfere with a course of rude love-making which was in progress, and he became impatient both with the father of the girl and the girl herself. One night, therefore, he and three other bandits assailed the house of his beloved, and summoned the father to deliver her into their hands. Objections being made, the father was seduced outside the house, instantly gagged and roped, and carried off to a cavern in the Pintica. An attempt at rescue on the part of a more acceptable suitor for the girl, accompanied by two friends, resulted in their capture also. They were detained for a while, but at length Antonio let them all go, his rival swearing solemnly to renounce the girl, and her father swearing to give her to the bandit. The oath was, however, disregarded, and on April 30, 1850, the marriage took place. On June 27, 1850, Antonio killed the husband, and again pressed for the hand of the unfortunate young widow. But the girl and the father and all the household straightway left the district, alarmed for their lives. Shortly afterwards Antonio killed another man. He had a grievance against a certain youth whom he charged with compromising his sister. The youth refused to marry her. A blood-feud was the result, and a victim fell in an ambuscade, though, as it happened, not the intended victim.

Since then Antonio and his brother Giacomo have resided in Pintica, and always with their lives in their hands. Their fastness is wellnigh inaccessible without one of the initiated for a guide. The town of Bocognano, about four miles distant, is at their feet. The citizens are controlled by them in an extraordinary manner. They dare not elect a mayor or any other functionary except with the sanction of the Bellacoscia. A few years ago the bandits were judicially condemned for using force in the senatorial elections. But one sentence more makes no difference to them, and their candidate is always successful.

They, with their wives and children and certain relatives who find it convenient to live in seclusion, make up a population of about thirty souls. There is never, therefore, any lack of sentinels in the gorge. No one can approach within a mile or two without being seen. The houses of the bandits are strong, and adapted to stand a tight siege if need be. But the bandits themselves

rely for defence more upon their moral influence over their neighbours. The signals that pass between them and Bocognano keep them posted in the doings of the world, and especially such as concern them. As a last resort there is a certain cave, the secret of which is well kept, and thither by a fearsome track athwart the porphyry steeps of Monte d'Oro, they can betake themselves in perfect security.

Why not, it may be asked, send a column of soldiers against the Bellacoscia, and starve them out? Pintica ought not to be impregnable after Badajoz and Sebastopol. In effect it has been tried. In September 1886 no fewer than a hundred and eighty-six armed men assailed the gorge and blockaded it. Of course it surrendered in time. But meanwhile, where, think you, were the Bellacoscia? Safe in the house of a certain mayor of a village, one of the creatures of their own election. When the soldiers at length withdrew, the bandits reoccupied Pintica; and there they may still be found.¹

Further, they have had several pitched battles with the gendarmes, in which they have been enabled considerably to increase the dole of lives for which they are accountable; and they have sent bullets through the heads of divers unfortunates whom they suspected of informing against them or trying to checkmate them in other ways. They are, in fact, most accomplished murderers, and they are now rich in the possession of an estate, which they began by appropriating from a commune, and which they have since greatly enlarged by further encroachments, to which no one dare make objection, and which not only provides them with wine, wood, and oil in plenty, but feeds their flocks of sheep and pigs. The police have tried seizing the latter. The animals were duly sold by auction on account of the state; but it was an unfortunate affair for the purchasers only, seeing that soon the Bellacoscia reclaimed their property with arguments that were not to be resisted.

In 1869, when the Empress Eugénie visited Corsica, the Bellacoscia threw themselves at her feet as she passed through Bocognano. The charges against them were surely even then sufficient to excuse the police from being over-chivalrous with regard to them. They were not arrested, however, nor were they pardoned. It was war to the knife, or rather the gun (their favourite weapon) afterwards as it had been before. Again,

¹ Written in 1890.

in 1890, the wife and daughter of Giacomo descended from the Pintica nest to intercept M. Carnot in his progress through the island. The old woman had nothing to ask for her husband or husband's brother (that were a waste of breath, seeing that they had all the liberty they could have); but she wanted a remission of the sentence against one of her sons, lying in prison at Bastia. The father of this boy thought to give him a flavour of the gentleman by sending him to school in Ajaccio. When he left school, however, he soon killed his first man, and it was for this act that he was atoning as a convict.

Such are the famous bandits Bonelli, or Bellacoscia! It really seems as if France were proud of them, and did all in its power to preserve them as remarkable specimens of lawlessness for the diversion of visitors. With a little management it is no hard thing to get introduced to the rogues and their home. The old men are civil enough to a stranger, and especially if he is rich and an admirer of eccentric types. They will give him the kiss of peace, and bid their pretty daughters fetch wine-cups that they may drink his health. If they are asked to furnish proofs of their skill at musketry, to oblige him they will shoot at twenty-franc gold-pieces or lift the cork from champagne-bottles at a respectable number of paces, until the visitor begins to find the diversion expensive; but they must be treated with a becoming amount of respect, or there is no knowing what such despots may take it into their heads to do. They have a seal for their letters which ensures them local delivery as surely as if they carried the stamp of the republic. They have received presents of value from ladies and gentlemen with royal blood in their veins, and they stand towards the rest of the world not a little like Napoleon himself in the height of his fortune. They are by no means ordinary beings. Heaven only knows whether they will die, as they have lived, out of the pale of the law; but it may safely be said that their end will not be a violent one. The district would revolt rather than suffer such a wrong to be done upon its heroes—its lords and its masters. If certain local politicians are to be believed, Corsica has already lost much of its regard for the Republic simply and solely because M. Carnot confessed himself personally willing enough to pardon the Bellacoscia, but, in deference to the law, unable to do so.

The Bellacoscia are the type of a kind of Corsican bandit, but not the worst. They do not seem ever to have indulged in indis-

criminate brigandage. Doubtless if they were forced into a corner they would not mind kidnapping a lord and holding him for ransom, or even lifting a purse like an ordinary highwayman. But fortune has treated them more civilly. They have nothing in common, therefore, with ruffians like the three bandits who, in November, 1886, at eight o'clock in the evening, entered an hotel in Ajaccio and demanded 3,000 francs from the landlady under the terrorism of their pistols. The hotel was full of guests, and the waiters were running about with dishes for the *table d'hôte* dinner. Such extreme publicity was too much even for the nerves of a Corsican bandit, and so when an alarm was given these rascals stole off, though not without firing a volley which nearly killed a man. In the same year there was a case of dastardly murder by bandits. An Italian vessel sent two sailors ashore for fresh water. The bandits seized them and sent one aboard with a demand for ransom; this was refused, and they blew out the brains of their wretched captive and left him prone upon the shore. With such deeds the Bellacoscia profess to have no sympathy.

Of a truth, life in Corsica is not an unmitigated blessing. The child unborn may be saddled with the grimmest responsibilities by its earnest mother; and ere it is weaned it may have learned by heart the sound of the lament which anon will be a more immediate spur to retaliatory crime. A sketch from modern life will illustrate this. Some eight years ago the body of a man of Sartène was found lying upon the ground; the news was taken to his wife, who hurried to the spot with her children, made them put their fingers into their dead father's wounds, smear their little faces with the blood, and swear, with an emphasis fit to terrify them, that they would avenge him. Here is a fine tragedy, the first act alone of which has been played. Meanwhile the children are growing, and when they are well in their first teens the boys will begin to rehearse the murder or murders which have been imposed upon them as an imperative duty. Ere the century is out, bloody atonement will be made.

The Sartène district is, indeed, so pervaded with the vendetta that the tourist may not unreasonably fear lest he be the scapegoat for some local bandit. How is he to know the history of the gentlemanly rustic in black velvet and a black slouched hat who, with a gun on his shoulder, accosts him upon the high road, and charms him with his conversation for an hour or two? To be sure, he may guess a little if he marks the eager glances on both

hands where the scrub or the rocks are suggestive of an ambuscade; but at the same time he may be unwilling to cast a slur upon so entertaining a comrade even in fancy, and the crack of a rifle may then be his first intimation of danger. The bandit among the rocks will no doubt be a shrewd marksman. Yet in the intensity of his joy at sight of his enemy his nerves may just divert the ball into the heart of the innocent instead of the guilty person.

It is the rule, however, for a bandit in vendetta, especially if he have a good many relatives, not to stir out unprovided with an escort of them. They may number a dozen, or but two or three. The stranger meeting this troop of mounted and well-armed natives is apt to wonder, until he gets behind the scenes of Corsican life.

An escort of this kind is not a mere formal concession of friendship which upon trial will be found wanting in reality. At the least sign of peril, every man will fight for his ward to the death. A recent instance of this is on record. The gendarmes met a notorious bandit riding along, with four friends as a guard. As they outnumbered the others, they instantly attacked the party; of the five, four were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners. The bandit himself, who was the fifth, escaped.

The breadth of social anarchy in the Sartène district will be better understood by the fact that, eight years ago, out of a population of about eight thousand, more than four thousand were on the criminal list. Of course they were not all murderers; but it may without exaggeration be said that each of these criminals at large had the making of a murderer in him. The peasant condemned to pay a fine for letting his pigs stray into his neighbour's vineyard is as like as not, in a fit of rage, to take the life of the neighbour who complained of him or of the mayor who condemned him. Nowhere do little crimes swell more readily into monstrous ones.

At least half the 'vendette' in existence at the present time have, like the Trojan war, had trivial beginnings. A quarrel at a wrestling match; a dead dog; the ownership of a pig that has probably roamed wild ever since it was littered; a vote at a political election; or an ambiguous phrase used in public—anything is enough to set the Corsican blood in a boil. That is the prologue. Then some one is killed. The blood-tax of atonement will afterwards keep the quarrel afoot from generation to generation. It may end in the extinction of two entire families, or by

mutual consent the heads of the families at enmity may descend from the bush and reconcile themselves before a court of justice. No matter if they have each been homicides thrice or four times over: the French Courts respect the Corsican tradition, whereby 'a reconciliation blots out the past.'

It is all very well for romancers to imagine that the life of a bold bandit is one of unadulterated charm. It never could have been that. Hate is a warm passion, but the snows of winter, the rains and mists of the mountains, go far to put out its flames in so far as they help to comfort the man in whom they are flickering. There is no need for the Corsican bandit to starve. He has many ways of victualling himself. In this or that unoccupied country house he knows that he will periodically find a store of coarse food, which is the proprietor's retaining fee for his services in case of need. The shepherds of the uplands, too, are bound to conciliate such clever marksmen, and welcome them to potluck at supper-time. And if the bandits are capable men, they need never lack a sufficiency of friends in certain towns and villages; so that the pleasure of a day or two of more lusty life may also be open to them. Still, a man must have a bold heart and a stout constitution to tolerate more than a month or two in the bush.

'No more ham and no more rice!' sings one of these outlaws in his lament; 'we have nothing to do but weep,' and, it may be added, keep a good watch upon the movements of the enemy 'in order to destroy them.'

Surely pity for his wretched condition would be wasted upon the man who nourishes himself upon such grim anticipations as the following 'vocero' suggests:

'I, the unfortunate Don Giacomo, called Chiaverini, bandit at large, who have had two brothers killed, both innocent.

'My poor mother, I see her and my sister, both weeping, and always bewailing our woe. Is there any cure for our sorrow?

'Yes, I can cure it with the lead I carry in my belt. I trust his blood will redden the earth. I long also to steep in it the clothes I wear.

'I want to kill him—kill him pitilessly. And then I will tear him open and take out his heart and eat it, that my honour may be avenged!'

Of 135 homicides who, in 1886, figured in the police reports of Bastia (where the assizes are held), as many as 56 were the result of vendetta. No wonder the island is in a deplorable

condition financially. Thousands of the inhabitants concentrate their faculties upon this one object only: the doing of wrong to others who have or are believed to have done wrong to them.

Here is a little story of Corsican life. Two brothers of good family had lived together in fair harmony until April of 1890. To be sure they had had a lawsuit with each other, but that was settled amicably after a while. Well, one day they rose and breakfasted together as usual. The elder brother then went into his bedroom, which in Corsican fashion opened from the dining-room. A moment later he stole back with a hatchet in his hand, and, while his brother was lighting a cigar, dealt him a blow behind, upon the neck, as if to decapitate him. The would-be assassin was eighty-eight years old. What a stock of vitality he must have had, to be able to nurse his resentment to the degree at which he felt compelled to avenge himself by his brother's death! However, the victim did not die, and the old man had energy enough left to withdraw to his own room and commit suicide.

The author of 'Mr. Barnes of New York' has shown true grasp of the Corsican character in his heroine. Though it is not the fashion in the island to rate a woman as the equal of a man, she will, if need be, do her duty in vengeance as well as a man.

'Speak, whom wilt thou choose to execute thy vendetta?' sings Maria Felice of Calacuccia, on the death of her brother. 'Thy mother? But she is dying. Thy sister Maria? Yes, she will do. And so—

I will buy myself a pistol
And in breeches me attire.'

These aids, with the bloodstained shirt of the murdered man as a perennial reminder, will generally suffice.

Upon the whole, the ideal of womankind in Corsica is not of a kind to charm the more fastidious among us of civilised lands. In the full grip of their passion of hate they would seem loathsome to us, however adorable to a thoroughbred Corsican. Even their gift of poetic improvisation, which is thought such a fine attribute in them, must be a very dubious blessing to those who provide them with a subject to rhyme upon. The following verses are a case in point. A certain man had married a girl against the will of her family. The girl died after a year or two of married life, and then, at the wake (for, if wine be substituted for whisky, the scene bears comparison with that of the Irish death-chamber—save that it is more sober), the dead woman's sister came and

sang this lament in the presence of the unfortunate husband and his relatives :

'Are these the promises that thy husband made thee? That thou shouldst have a dress at the beginning of every month?

'Where are thy bonnets? Where thy velvets? What has thy husband done with them? Has he pawned or has he sold them?

'Is that fellow there thy husband? And that other thy brother-in-law? The one looks like an executioner, and the other a man outside the pale of society.

'Is this thy palace: are these thy halls? Oh, Cecca, sister of my heart, it is but a shepherd's hovel!

'Where are thy sons? They are shut up in their rooms, half starved, barefooted, and naked.

'In thy father's house thou wert wont to wear fine laced boots. In the house of Orsolo Matteo (the husband) there is not a single pair of old shoes.

'In thy father's house there were lamps of all kinds. In the house of Orsolo Matteo there is hardly a splinter of pine.

'In thy father's house, there were delicious cakes. In the house of Orsolo Matteo scarcely even some bread made of chestnuts.

'I have not come here to eat. I have not come here to drink. I have come here to sorrow for Cecca, and then I shall go away. She has left three eggs in her nest (three children). I shall carry them off with me.'

Though probably much depressed on account of his bereavement, the poor widower must have felt strongly inclined to box his sister-in-law's ears during this shrewish song, which is solid testimony that in Corsica, as elsewhere, the fair sex are supreme in the use of the tongue.

As a land to travel in, Corsica is very tiresome and very lovely. It is tiresome because it has few railways, and because its diligences are of the most uncouth and obsolete kind.

It may seem bold to say that the bandits are accountable for the lack of railway enterprise. That, however, is the truth. It is the most difficult thing in the world to buy out, upon anything like equitable terms, the proprietors of land intersected by proposed railway lines. The arbitrators are biassed, like all other classes of people in Corsica. They have their friends and their foes; the former are favoured, the latter wronged. If a friend and a foe are each called upon to surrender an acre or two of the

same kind of land, the one will get an award many times greater than the other. This breeds bad blood; some one is killed in consequence. Perhaps several bandits in the pay of one of the two parties descend from the hills, and compel the arbitrator to do their biddings at the peril of his life. The Bellacoscia family, for example, think nothing of interfering in the works of the state railway destined (perhaps ere A.D. 2000) to link Bastia and Ajaccio. If they have friends who want to earn a little money at rail-laying or blasting, they put it to the contractor, 'Either you must dismiss so many of your workmen and take on our nominees, or we will stop your proceedings.' It is of no use for the contractor to pretend to be superior to such interference. In the end, the bandits rule the roost.

One owes it to these gentry that one is obliged to leave the railway at Vizzavone, and drive the thirty kilometres of mountain and valley which still separate Corte from Ajaccio. This would be less of a hardship if one could sit at ease in the diligence, and view the delightful country through which one gallops. But as it is, the snow-peaks above the chestnut trees and pine woods must be imagined, not seen, by the average traveller under such conditions. The passengers are packed like oranges inside the vehicle, or cramped in the 'banquette,' with the sides of the hood of the car as bars to vision. One hears the roar of waterfalls, but sees nothing of the water. One knows that one is in the midst of mountain scenery unmatched in the Mediterranean, but only the most trivial glimpses of it are obtainable. This of itself ought to be enough to put even the most romantic of travellers out of humour with the bandits who get their spoke into the administration of the land to such very bad purpose.

One may read something of the eccentric hardness of their lives in the faces of the Corsican villagers amid whom one passes either afoot, mounted, or in diligence. The men may be very amiable fellows—in all matters that do not touch what they conceive to be their honour; nevertheless they seem to lour abominably; and one would not be surprised to see each man of them, as if in concert, move his hand towards that inner waistcoat-pocket where he carries his stiletto.

But a little thought will remove all wonder that they are so dark of brow. Each village and each town is divided against itself. The clan spirit breeds the fury of the Kilkenny cats within them. It finds a vent at every election; and between one election

and another it continues to smoulder, with occasional outbreaks which have dire issues. The men of one party meet the men of the other party many times a day, and give them no salutation. A 'good-morrow' or 'good-e'en' from one to the other might be misconstrued, and a stiletto thrust or a bullet pay for the irony and add one more to the troop of rogues in the hills above who play with their more law-abiding brethren as if they were chess-men set out upon the green valleys to be moved hither and thither at will.

Of course a stranger does not stand towards the Corsicans as they stand towards each other. They are neither so intimate with him as they are with the members of their own clan, nor are they likely to be envenomed against him as if he were an ancestral enemy. But they do not discredit their reputation for an amount of hospitality that may even be termed generous. In the Cap Corse district the writer found this almost embarrassing. He was expected to drink more wine than is good for any man, and smoke cigars as fast as they would burn. The wine was of home pressing, and as the hosts stood by prepared for compliments, a certain amount of flattery had to be served out to them. A lady with whom and her brother I one day spent a number of hours in a diligence worthy to be compared with the little-ease torture-box pressed me to make her father's house my home for the night, and showed grief when I felt compelled to decline the invitation. Upon another occasion this regard was also shown in a more remarkable way. I was walking over the mountains from one side of the peninsula to the other, in company with a stout guide in whose house I had spent the night, when we came to a little upland village and a church into which it seemed desirable to enter. 'Why,' I asked afterwards, 'did you not take the holy water when we passed the stoup?' 'From delicacy, sir,' was the reply, spoken eagerly, as if it was a relief to justify himself. 'I did not know if you were a Catholic, and if you were not, I thought it might give you offence.' If that was not courtesy of the most admirable kind, I don't know what is. Though, to be sure, a cynic might explain it upon the ground that in Corsica social intercourse is so very ticklish an affair that the utmost caution is needful to keep from injuring some one's sensibilities and incurring the consequences.

Cap Corse is charming. The 'Cap Corsicans,' as they call themselves, like to fancy that they are more intelligent than the

Corsicans elsewhere. Perhaps they are. They certainly have a knack of acquiring and keeping money. Many of them owe their wealth to the Argentine Republic, but they prefer to come home to spend their last days on the breezy shores of this herb-clad headland. In one part of the peninsula, where a road is cut through a mountain pass at an elevation of about 1,500 feet above the sea, there is an inscription recording 'the last thought of a Corsican dying two thousand leagues from home.' This is the thought:—'Write to our country folk, and tell them to make the road from Pirio to S. Lucia. If money is wanted, there is some one who will provide it.' In effect, the work was done at the expense of this patriotic exile. Really, it was the Commune's business; but the Communes in Corsica have other ways of utilising such money as does chance to come into their hands. Public works are quite the last things they think of. The bandits who control the mayors, who control the exchequer, do not like the idea of making the profession of gendarme easier than it is, or their own existence more precarious. The national roads made at the expense of the state are sufficiently sharp thorns in their sides.

No part of Corsica can be called very sophisticated, and Cap Corse perhaps least of all. It does one's civilised heart good to see how important a personage is the conductor of the wretched diligence which creeps to and fro between Bastia and its villages. The bright-eyed damsels meet the vehicle while it is yet far from the village, and begin their interrogations. Has he the medicine for Jacquetta's mother?—the love-letter for Marcia? For one family there is a newspaper; for another a bunch of greens (the lazy Cap Corsicans would rather buy their salad material than grow it); for a third a parcel of flannel; a fourth a message; and for the fifth, maybe, a menace shouted *en route* and the delivery of which makes its recipient go pale and bite his lips. It is a marvel how the conductor keeps his head in the midst of the agitated questionings, made in the same breath, to which he is subjected when at length the car has been dragged through the chestnut woods of the villages to the little post-office in the heart of the village. Here half the population is assembled, either to bless him for doing their errands, or to pour forth the vials of their wrath upon him for forgetting their commissions. And round about stand the little Cap Corse boys, staring with admiration at the equipage and all concerned with it, and ready at a sign to fall down and worship his majesty the driver, or blush rosy red with

honest boyish pride if the man does but flick his whip at them in a moment of condescending levity.

But the serpent is among these winsome upland villages, as elsewhere in Corsica. Gazing towards the nether blue sea from their terraces, through the vista of forest trees in spring leafage, the scene savours of Paradise, and the sweet bracing air is a joy to breathe. Yet murder, perjury, and embezzlement are commonplace crimes in these sylvan spots.

I chanced to be in the peninsula at a time when the new prefect of Corsica was making his tour of the island. Each little village *en route* had its arches of welcome, with ropes of dandelion heads hanging to the ground, and the usual words of salutation done on scrolls. One village in particular was populous with gentlemen in broadcloth and tall hats. The prefect himself had arrived, and to and fro his worship drove, bowing to the villagers. These received him humbly, though the officials among them tried their lungs at an ovation. Certain fair damsels in Paris hats looked as if they enjoyed the sensation, and were as eager to be noticed as to notice. But for the rest it was a flat triumph. And well it might be. For the prefect in Corsica does not walk on roses. His worship had had some five- or six-and-twenty predecessors in the last twenty years, and each man had failed to make the island any the happier for his brief term of office.

The fact is the prefect is almost as much under the thumb of the bandits as are the rural mayors and sub-prefects. He may be a man of immense determination and complete integrity, who reaches Ajaccio from Paris fully aware of the lamentable condition of the island, and thoroughly resolved to wipe away the disgrace that is upon it—in short, to substitute the rule of law for the rule of anarchy. But how can he succeed, when the only instruments by which he is to work his reforms are instruments in the pay of anarchy? He will not at the outset believe that it is so; the idea is too monstrous. But by-and-by he learns only too well that he can reap little honour in this department of France. And so he resigns or is superseded, and the land passes into the hands of another prefect who has to be disillusioned in like manner.

How long will France consent to let the condition of this lovely island fall gradually from bad to worse? It may be said that this paper is pessimistic—that it is absurd to suppose that in the year 1890 a petty province of one of the leading states of Europe is torn by civil war which the state itself is powerless to

quell. It is absurd, but it is not the less true. The report of Monsieur Bourde in 1887, to which I am indebted for much of my material, is one for which no apology can be made. Some writers give Corsica the name of 'the Green Isle,' which we give to Ireland. We have been vigorously reproached with the barbaric condition of our Green Isle, but the anarchy of Ireland at its worst a few years ago was nothing to that which at present exists in Corsica.

Are the bandits the cause or the effect of Corsica's disorder?

At first sight it may be thought that they are the cause. When one reads of their despotic intermeddling in the administration of the island—carried to such a pitch that the elections are made under the shadow of their guns—it does not seem so very rash to blame them for all the consequences of such venal elections. The mayors of the communes are their creatures; or, if not, they must be ousted at the next ballot. The jurymen in the law courts do all they can to avoid serving. It is a common menace with them to warn the prisoner on trial for murder that if he does not challenge them on a plausible pretext, that may procure them their dismissal, they will bring him in 'guilty.' On the other hand, it is no great matter if the captured bandit be condemned, though his hands may have been drenched with blood. The Court of Assize at Bastia thinks five years' imprisonment enough punishment for the crime of 'murder with provocation,' which is their definition of killing in vendetta. The family at enmity with the felon and his family in such a case are not, however, of the opinion of the court. They estimate the value of their relation's life at more than five years' penal servitude. This very odd result therefore follows, that whereas the murderer's foes would have been content to stay their hands if their enemy had been treated with proper severity by the law (that is, sentenced either for life or fifteen years), as it is they feel bound by their code of honour to take up the gage once more against the family of their foe. 'Five years is not sufficient for the life of our Francesco or Giacomo,' they say; and in a week or so they contrive to shoot the prisoner's father or mother or brother to square the account. Hence fresh entanglements which no Corsican judge can easily unravel.

The historian Filippini, writing of the state of Corsica three hundred years ago, says that one of the great misfortunes of the island is the number of 'those infernal instruments called guns

in the hands of the inhabitants.' These same words are quite applicable to-day. Napoleon III. forbade the carrying of arms in the island. Under his reign the number of bandits was gradually reduced, so that at the time of Sedan it is supposed not twenty were left at large. Compare this with the picture of 1890, when no discreet peasant travels without his gun, and when at the lowest estimate the number of bandits has increased fivefold, while more authoritative reckonings make them twenty-five times as many as in 1870. During the year 1886 alone it is believed that seventy-eight bandits took to the hills. The number of gendarmes in the island has been raised from seven hundred to nine hundred in the effort to make headway against them.

There seems, too, to be no doubt that the increase of the bandits is the outcome of the administration of the island. In Corsica, as of old in the Highlands, the clan spirit is predominant. Loyalty to the clan is a greater virtue than loyalty to the law. This notion is not confined to the more lowly members of the clan. Rich Corsicans, who have been educated in Paris, and have afterwards returned to the island, have found it impossible to resist the national tendency. Though they admire justice in the abstract, they love their clansmen more than they love the law. If they have to sacrifice one to the other, it is the law that must go to the wall.

This is the key to the puzzle. From judges to jury, all are affected by the endemic disease of lawlessness. The clan in power carries all before it. The clan that aspires to be in power devotes all its energies to intrigues which have but one aim—to abase its rival. No wonder then that the elections in the island are very serious affairs. There is a vast deal of comedy about them too, but it is so interlaced with the roots of tragedy that one is prone to overlook it. The mayors of the villages falsify the electoral lists, add to or take from the names as it suits their convenience, and use all manner of tricks to keep in power once they are in power. On the other hand, when the opposing clan feels that it has the majority it has long striven and waited for, it does not hesitate to use force to expel the defeated clan, if its officers will not take their dismissal more gently. This is then easy; for the change is one that takes place all down the line—from the judge who judges the electoral suits to the mayors who are so vitally interested in them.

Every peasant of Corsica is affected more or less by this

political or quasi-political ferment. He must belong to one clan or the other, or else confess himself friendless, and therefore a prey to both factions. Needless to say how crimes originate in the midst of such turmoil of passions, and how the punishment for crime, as for all other contraventions of the law, is meted out strictly in accordance—not with justice, but with the requirements of the clan. Taxes are levied on the same admirable principle. A friend pays little or nothing; an enemy considerably more than his due. As for the proceeds of such taxation, Heaven and the officers concerned with their collection alone know what becomes of them. During the year 1885 about 1,000,000 francs of fines were imposed upon petty offenders in the island. Of this sum only 75,000 francs were paid; about half was carried forward as 'recoverable but not paid,' and the rest was accounted for by the word 'irrecoverable.' The rural mayors cheerfully cancelled the demands made upon their own clansmen by equivalent certificates of poverty.

It may well be left to the imagination to trace the evolution of modern banditism from the social chaos that must be the result of such administration as this. Between a mayor of a village and the bandits whom he petitions for help in this or that arbitrary proceeding there can be but a difference of degree. Next year the mayor himself may be an outlaw in the scrub, and the bandits with whom he formerly fraternised may have made their peace with the law and their enemies.

One understands at length that the very blood in his veins compels the Corsican in certain straits to condemn himself to outlawry. It is the only honourable course open to him. If you ask him for a definition of the word bandit, he will reply with pride 'a man who has found himself obliged to take the law into his own hands.' The somewhat academical explanation of the term 'vendetta' given the other day by Antonio Bonelli (Bellacoscia) the younger is close akin to this: 'It is the historical impossibility under which the Corsicans have laboured for centuries to obtain justice at the hands of their rulers and tyrants.'

As one glides away from the seven-storied white houses of Bastia, over the smooth blue sea towards Italy, one is sensible of a certain gladness in leaving 'this island of death,' as Gregorovius calls it. It is too depressing a land to be a holiday resort, in spite of its beauty. The white tombs which mottle its green shores are only too suggestive.

THE SOWERS.

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,

AUTHOR OF 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

OSTERNO.

'ALWAYS gay; always gay!' laughed Steinmetz, rubbing his broad hands together and looking down into the face of Maggie, who was busy at the breakfast-table.

'Yes,' answered the girl, glancing towards Paul, leaning against the window reading his letters. 'Yes, always gay. Why not?'

Karl Steinmetz saw the glance. It was one of the little daily incidents that one sees and half forgets. He only half forgot it.

'Why not, indeed?' he answered. 'And you will be glad to hear that Ivanovitch is as ready as yourself this morning to treat the matter as a joke. He is none the worse for his freezing and all the better for his experience. You have added another friend, my dear young lady, to a list which is, doubtless, a very long one.'

'He is a nice man,' answered Maggie. 'How is it,' she asked, after a little pause, 'that there are more men in the lower classes whom one can call nice than among their betters?'

Paul paused between two letters, hearing the question. He looked up as if interested in the answer, but did not join in the conversation.

'Because dealing with animals and with nature is more conducive to niceness than too much trafficking with human beings,' replied Steinmetz promptly.

'I suppose that is it,' said Maggie, lifting the teapot lid and looking in. 'At all events, it is the sort of answer one might expect from you. You are always hard on human nature.'

'I take it as I find it,' replied Steinmetz with a laugh, 'but I do not worry about it like some people. Now, Paul would like to alter the course of the world.'

As he spoke he half turned towards Paul, as if suggesting that

he should give an opinion, and this little action had the effect of putting a stop to the conversation. Maggie had plenty to say to Steinmetz, but towards Paul her mental attitude was different. She was probably unaware of this little fact.

'There,' she said, after a pause, 'I have obeyed Etta's instructions. She does not want us to begin, I suppose?'

'No,' replied Paul. 'She will be down in a minute.'

'I hope the Princess is not overtired,' said Steinmetz, with a certain formal politeness which seemed to accompany any mention of Etta's name.

'Not at all, thank you,' replied Etta herself, coming into the room at that moment. She looked fresh and self-confident. 'On the contrary, I am full of energy and eagerness to explore the castle. One naturally takes an interest in one's baronial halls.'

With this she walked slowly across to the window. She stood there looking out, and everyone in the room was watching. On looking for the first time on the same view a few moments earlier Maggie had uttered a little cry of surprise, and had then remained silent. Etta looked out of the window and said nothing. It was a most singular outlook—weird, uncouth, prehistoric, as some parts of the earth still are. The castle was built on the edge of a perpendicular cliff. On this side it was impregnable. Any object dropped from the breakfast-room window would fall a clear two hundred feet to the brawling Oster River. The rock was black, and shining like the topmost crags of an Alpine mountain where snow and ice have polished the bare stone. Beyond and across the river lay the boundless steppe—a sheet of virgin snow.

Etta stood looking over this to the far horizon, where the white snow and the grey sky softly merged into one. Her first remark was characteristic, as first and last remarks usually are.

'And as far as you can see is yours?' she asked.

'Yes,' answered Paul simply, with that calm which only comes with hereditary possession.

The observation attracted Steinmetz's attention. He went to another window, and looked across the waste critically.

'Four times as far as we can see is his,' he said.

Etta looked out slowly and comprehensively, absorbing it all like a long sweet drink. There was no hereditary calmness in her sense of possession.

'And where is Thors?' she asked.

Paul stretched out his arm, pointing with a lean, steady finger. 'It lies out there,' he answered.

Another of the little incidents that are only half forgotten. Some of the persons assembled in that room remembered the pointing finger long afterwards.

'It makes one feel very small,' said Etta, turning to the breakfast-table—'at no time a pleasant sensation.'

'Do you know,' she said, after a little pause, 'I think it probable that I shall become very fond of Osterno, but I wish it were nearer to civilisation.'

Paul looked pleased. Steinmetz had a queer expression on his face. Maggie murmured something about one's surroundings making but little difference to one's happiness, and the subject was wisely shelved.

After breakfast Steinmetz withdrew.

'Now,' said Paul, 'shall I show you the old place, you and Maggie?'

Etta signified her readiness, but Maggie said that she had letters to write, that Etta could show her the castle another time, when the men were out shooting perhaps.

'But,' said Etta, 'I shall do it horribly badly. They are not my ancestors, you know. I shall attach the stories to the wrong people, and locate the ghost in the wrong room. You will be wise to take Paul's guidance.'

'No, thank you,' replied Maggie, quite firmly and frankly. 'I feel inclined to write; and the feeling is rare, so I must take advantage of it.'

The girl looked at her cousin with something in her honest blue eyes that almost amounted to wonder. Etta was always surprising her. There was a whole gamut of feeling, an octave of callow, half-formed girlish instincts, of which Etta seemed to be deprived. If she had ever had them, no trace was left of their whilom presence. At first Maggie had flatly refused to come to Russia. When Paul pressed her to do so, she accepted with a sort of wonder. There was something which she did not understand.

The same instinct made her refuse now to accompany Paul and Etta over their new home. Again Etta pressed her, showing her lack of some feeling which Maggie indefinitely knew she ought to have had. This time Paul made no sign. He added no word to Etta's persuasions, but stood gravely looking at his wife.

When the door had closed behind them, Maggie stood for some minutes by the window looking out over the snowclad plain, the rugged, broken rocks beneath her.

Then she turned to the writing-table. She resolutely took pen and paper, but the least thing seemed to distract her attention—the coronet on the note-paper cost her five minutes of far-off reflection. She took up the pen again, and wrote ‘Dear Mother.’

The room grew darker. Maggie looked up. The snow had begun again. It was driving past the window with a silent, purposeful monotony. The girl drew the writing-case towards her. She examined the pen critically and dipped it into the ink. But she added nothing to the two words already written.

The castle of Osterno is almost unique in the particular that one roof covers the ancient and the modern buildings. The vast reception-rooms, worthy of the name of state-rooms, adjoin the small stone-built apartments of the fortress which Paul’s ancestors held against the Tartars. This grimmer side of the building Paul reserved to the last for reasons of his own, and Etta’s manifest delight in the grandeur of the more modern apartments fully rewarded him. Here, again, that side of her character manifested itself which has already been shown. She was dazzled and exhilarated by the splendour of it all, and the immediate effect was a feeling of affection towards the man to whom this belonged, who was in act, if not in word, laying it at her feet.

When they passed from the lofty rooms to the dimmer passages of the old castle Etta’s spirits visibly dropped, her interest slackened. He told her of tragedies enacted in bygone times—such ancient tales of violent death and broken hearts as attach themselves to grey stone walls and dungeon keeps. She only half listened, for her mind was busy with the splendours they had left behind, with the purposes to which such splendours could be turned. And the sum-total of her thoughts was gratified vanity.

Her bright presence awakened the gloom of ages within the dimly-lit historical rooms. Her laugh sounded strangely light and frivolous and shallow in the silence of the ages which had brooded within these walls since the days of Tamerlane. It was perhaps the greatest tragedy of the Alexis family, this beautiful tragedy that walked by the side of Paul.

‘I am glad your grandfather brought French architects here and built the modern side,’ she said. ‘These rooms are, of course,

very interesting, but gloomy—horribly gloomy, Paul. There is a smell of ghosts and dulness.'

'All the same, I like these rooms,' answered Paul. 'Steinmetz and I used to live entirely on this side of the house. This is the smoking-room. We shot those bears, and all the deer. That is a wolf's head. He killed a keeper before I finished him off.'

Etta looked at her husband with a curious little smile. She sometimes felt proud of him, despite the ever-present knowledge that, intellectually speaking, she was his superior. There was something strong and simple and manly in a sort of mediæval way that pleased her in this big husband of hers.

'And how did you finish him off?' she asked.

'I choked him. That bear knocked me down, but Steinmetz shot him. We were four days out in the open after that elk. This is a lynx—a queer face—rather like De Chauville; the dogs killed him.'

'But why do you not paper the room,' asked Etta, with a shiver, 'instead of this gloomy panelling? It is so mysterious and creepy. Quite suggestive of secret passages.'

'There are no secret passages,' answered Paul. 'But there is a room behind here. This is the door. I will show it to you presently. I have things in there I want to show you. I keep all my medicines and appliances in there. It is our secret surgery and office. In that room the Charity League was organised.'

Etta turned away suddenly and went to the narrow window, where she sat on a low window-seat, looking down into the snow-clad depths.

'I did not know you were a doctor,' she said.

'I doctor the peasants,' replied Paul, 'in a rough-and-ready way. I took my degree on purpose. But, of course, they do not know that it is I; they think I am a doctor from Moscow. I put on an old coat, and wear a scarf, so that they cannot see my face. I only go to them at night. It would never do for the Government to know that we attempt to do good to the peasants. We have to keep it a secret even from the people themselves. And they hate us. They groan and hoot when we drive through the village. But they never attempt to do us any harm; they are too much afraid of us.'

When Etta rose and came towards him her face was colourless.

'Let me see this room,' she said.

He opened the door and followed her into the apartment, which

has already been described. Here he told further somewhat bald details of the work he had attempted to do. It is to be feared that he made neither an interesting nor a romantic story of it. There were too many details—too much statistic, and no thrilling realism whatever. The experiences of a youthful curate in Bethnal Green would have made high tragedy beside the tale that this man told his wife of the land upon which God has assuredly laid His curse—Aceldama, the field of blood.

Etta listened, and despite herself she became interested. She was sitting in the chair usually occupied by Steinmetz. There was a faint aroma of tobacco smoke. The atmosphere of the room was manly and energetic.

Paul showed her his simple stores of medicine—the old coat saturated with disinfectants which had become the recognised outward sign of the Moscow Doctor.

‘And do other people, other noblemen, try to do this sort of thing too?’ asked Etta at length.

‘Catrina Lanovitch does,’ replied Paul.

‘What! The girl with the hair?’

‘Yes,’ answered Paul. He had never noticed Catrina’s hair. Etta’s appraising eye had seen more in one second than Paul had perceived in twenty years.

‘Yes,’ he answered. ‘But, of course, she is handicapped.’

‘By her appearance?’

‘No; by her circumstances. Her name is sufficient to handicap her every movement in this country. But she does a great deal. She—she found me out, confound her!’

Etta had risen; she was looking curiously at the cupboard where Paul’s infected clothes were hanging. He had forbidden her to go near it. She turned and looked at him.

‘Found you out! How?’ she asked, with a queer smile.

‘Saw through my disguise.’

‘Yes—she would do that!’ said Etta aloud to herself.

‘What is this door?’ she asked, after a pause.

‘It leads to an inner room,’ replied Paul, ‘where Steinmetz usually works.’

He passed in front of her and opened the door. As he was doing so Etta went on in the train of her thoughts:

‘So Catrina knows.’

‘Yes.’

‘And no one else?’

Paul made no answer; for he had passed on into the smaller room, where Steinmetz was seated at a writing-table.

'Except, of course, Herr Steinmetz?' Etta went on interrogatively.

'Madame,' said the German, looking up with his pleasant smile, 'I know *everything*.'

And he went on writing.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BLOODHOUNDS.

THE *table d'hôte* of the Hôtel de Moscou at Tver had just begun. The soup had been removed; the diners were engaged in igniting their first cigarette at the candles placed between each pair of them for that purpose. By nature the modern Russian is a dignified and somewhat reserved gentleman. By circumstance he has been schooled into a state of guarded unsociability. If there is a seat at a public table conveniently removed from those occupied by earlier arrivals, the new-comer invariably takes it. In Russia one converses—as in Scotland one jokes—with difficulty.

A Russian *table d'hôte* is therefore anything but hilarious in its tendency. A certain number of grave-faced gentlemen and a few broad-jowled ladies are visibly constrained by the force of circumstance to dine at the same table and hour, *et voilà tout*. There is no pretence that any more sociable and neighbourly motive has brought them together. Indeed, they each suspect the other of being a German, or a Nihilist, or, worse still, a Government servant. They therefore sit as far apart as possible, and smoke cigarettes between and during the courses with that self-centred absorption which would be rude, if it were not entirely satisfactory, to the average Briton. The ladies, of course, have the same easy method of showing a desire for silence and reflection in a country where nurses carrying infants usually smoke in the streets, and where a dainty confectioner's assistant places her cigarette between her lips in order to leave her hands free for the service of her customers.

The *table d'hôte* of the Hôtel de Moscou at Tver was no exception to the general rule. In Russia, by the way, there are no exceptions to general rules. The personal habits of the native of Cronstadt differ in no way from those of the Czar's subject living in Petropavlovsk, eight thousand miles away.

Around the long table of the host were seated, at respectable intervals, a dozen or more gentlemen, who gazed stolidly at each other from time to time, while the host himself smiled broadly upon them all from that end of the room where the light and the smell of cooking exercise their calling—the one to spoil the appetite, the other to pander to it when spoilt.

Of these dozen gentlemen we have only to deal with one—a man of broad, high forehead, of colourless eyes, of a mask-like face, who consumed what was put before him with as little noise as possible. Known in Paris as ‘Ce bon Vassili,’ this traveller. But in Paris one does not always use the word *bon* in its English sense of ‘good.’

Monsieur Vassili was evidently desirous of attracting as little attention as circumstances would allow. He was obviously doing his best to look like one who travelled in the interest of braid or buttons. Moreover, when Claude de Chauville entered the *table d’hôte* room, he concealed whatever surprise he may have felt behind a cloud of cigarette smoke. Through the same blue haze he met the Frenchman’s eye, a moment later, without the faintest twinkle of recognition.

These two worthies went through the weird courses provided by a cook professing a knowledge of French *cuisine* without taking any compromising notice of each other. When the meal was over Vassili inscribed the number of his bedroom in large figures on the label of his bottle of St. Emilion—after the manner of wise commercial-travellers in continental hotels. He subsequently turned the bottle round so that Claude de Chauville could scarcely fail to read the number, and with a vague and general bow he left the room.

In his apartment the genial Vassili threw more wood into the stove, drew forward the two regulation armchairs, and lighted all the candles provided. He then rang the bell and ordered liqueurs. There was evidently something in the nature of an entertainment about to take place in apartment number forty-four of the Hôtel de Moscou.

Before long a discreet knock announced the arrival of the expected visitor.

‘Entrez!’ cried Vassili; and De Chauville stood before him with a smile which in French is called *crâne*.

‘A pleasure,’ said Vassili behind his wooden face, ‘that I did not anticipate in Tver.’

'And consequently one that carries its own mitigation. An unanticipated pleasure, *mon ami*, is always inopportune. I make no doubt that you were sorry to see me.'

'On the contrary. Will you sit?'

'I can hardly believe,' went on De Chauxville, taking the proffered chair, 'that my appearance was opportune—on the principle, ha! ha! that a flower growing out of place is a weed. Gentlemen of the—eh—Home Office prefer, I know, to travel quietly!' He spread out his expressive hands as if smoothing the path of Monsieur Vassili through this stony world. 'Incognito,' he added guilelessly.

'One does not publish one's name from the housetops,' replied the Russian, with a glimmer of pride in his eyes, 'especially if it happen to be not quite obscure; but between friends, my dear Baron—between friends.'

'Yes. Then what are you doing in Tver?' inquired De Chauxville, with engaging frankness.

'Ah, that is a long story. But I will tell you—never fear—I will tell you on the usual terms.'

'Viz.?' inquired the Frenchman, lighting a cigarette.

Vassili accepted the match with a bow, and did likewise. He blew a guileless cloud of smoke towards the dingy ceiling.

'Exchange, my dear Baron, exchange.'

'Oh, certainly,' replied De Chauxville, who knew that Vassili was in all probability fully informed as to his movements past and prospective. 'I am going to visit some old friends in this Government—the Lanovitchs at Thors.'

'Ah!'

'You know them?'

Vassili raised his shoulders and made a little gesture with his cigarette, as much as to say, 'Why ask?'

De Chauxville looked at his companion keenly. He was wondering whether this man knew that he—Claude de Chauxville—loved Etta Howard-Alexis, and consequently hated her husband. He was wondering how much or how little this impenetrable individual knew and suspected.

'I have always said,' observed Vassili suddenly, 'that for unmitigated impertinence give me a diplomatist.'

'Ah! And what would you desire that I should, for the same commodity, give you now?'

'A woman.'

There was a short silence in the room while these two birds of a feather reflected.

Suddenly Vassili tapped himself on the chest with his forefinger.

'It was I,' he said, 'who crushed that very dangerous movement—the Charity League.'

'I know it.'

'A movement, my dear Baron, to educate the moujik, if you please. To feed him and clothe him, and teach him—to be discontented with his lot. To raise him up and make a man of him. Pah! He is a beast. Let him be treated as such. Let him work. If he will not work, let him starve and die.'

'The man who cannot contribute towards the support of those above him in life is superfluous,' said De Chauxville glibly.

'Precisely. Now, my dear Baron, listen to me!' The genial Vassili leant forward and tapped with one finger on the knee of De Chauxville, as if knocking at the door of his attention.

'I am all ears, *mon bon Monsieur*,' replied the Frenchman, rather coldly. He had just been reflecting that, after all, he did not want any favour from Vassili for the moment, and the manner of the latter was verging on the familiar.

'The woman—who—sold—me—the Charity League papers dined at my house in Paris—a fortnight ago,' said Vassili, with a staccato tap on his companion's knee by way of emphasis to each word.

'Then, my friend, I cannot—congratulate—you—on the society—in—which you move,' replied De Chauxville, mimicking his manner.

'Bah! She was a princess!'

'A princess?'

'Yes, of your acquaintance, Monsieur le Baron! And she came to my house with her—eh—husband—the Prince Paul Howard-Alexis.'

This was news indeed. De Chauxville leant back and passed his slim white hand across his brow with a slow pressure, as if wiping some writing from a slate—as if his forehead bore the writing of his thoughts and he was wiping it away. And the thoughts he thus concealed—who can count them? For thoughts are the quickest and the longest and the saddest things of this life. The first thought was that if he had known this three months earlier he could have made Etta marry him. And that

thought had a thousand branches. With Etta for his wife he might have been a different man. One can never tell what the effect of an acquired desire may be. One can only judge by analogy, and it would seem that it is a frustrated desire that makes the majority of villains.

But the news coming, thus too late, only served an evil purpose. For in that flash of thought Claude de Chauville saw Paul's secrets given to him, Paul's wealth meted out to him, Paul in exile, Paul dead in Siberia, where death comes easily, Paul's widow Claude de Chauville's wife. He wiped all the thoughts away, and showed to Vassili a face that was as composed and impertinent as usual.

'You said "her—eh—husband,"' he observed. 'Why? Why did you add that little "eh," my friend?'

Vassili rose and walked to the door that led through into his bedroom from the salon in which they were sitting. It was possible to enter the bedroom from another door and overhear any conversation that might be passing in the sitting-room. The investigation was apparently satisfactory, for the Russian came back. But he did not sit down. Instead, he stood leaning against the tall china stove.

'Needless to tell you,' he observed, 'the antecedents of the—Princess.'

'Quite needless.'

'Married seven years ago to Charles Sydney Bamborough,' promptly giving the unnecessary information which was not wanted.

De Chauville nodded.

'Where is Sydney Bamborough?' asked Vassili, with his mask-like smile.

'Dead,' replied the other quietly.

'Prove it.'

De Chauville looked up sharply. The cigarette dropped from his fingers to the floor. His face was yellow and drawn, with a singular tremble of the lips, which were twisted to one side.

'Good God!' he whispered hoarsely.

There was only one thought in his mind—a sudden wild desire to rise up and stand by Etta against the whole world. Verily we cannot tell what love may make of us, whither it may lead us. We only know that it never leaves us as it found us.

Then, leaning quietly against the stove, Vassili stated his case.

'Rather more than a year ago,' he said, 'I received an offer of the papers connected with a great scheme in this country. After certain inquiries had been made I accepted the offer. I paid a fabulous price for the papers. They were brought to me by a lady wearing a thick veil—a lady I had never seen before. I asked no questions, and paid her the money. It subsequently transpired that the papers had been stolen, as you perhaps know, from the house of Count Stepán Lanovitch—the house to which you happen to be going—at Thors. Well, that is all ancient history. It is to be supposed that the papers were stolen by Sydney Bamborough, who brought them here—probably to this hotel, where his wife was staying. He handed her the papers, and she conveyed them to me in Paris. But before she reached Petersburg they would have been missed by Stepán Lanovitch, who would naturally suspect the man who had been staying in his house, Bamborough—a man with a doubtful reputation in the diplomatic world, a professed doer of dirty jobs. Foreseeing this, and knowing that the League was a big thing, with a few violent members on its books, Sydney Bamborough did not attempt to leave Russia by the western route. He probably decided to go through Nijni, down the Volga, across the Caspian, and so on to Persia and India. You follow me?'

'Perfectly!' answered De Chauxville coldly.

'I have been here a week,' went on the Russian spy, 'making inquiries. I have worked the whole affair out, link by link, till the evening when the husband and wife parted. She went west with the papers. Where did he go?'

De Chauxville picked up the cigarette, looked at it curiously, as at a relic—the relic of the moment of strongest emotion through which he had ever passed—and threw it into the ash-tray. He did not speak, and after a moment Vassili went on, stating his case with lawyer-like clearness.

'A body was found on the steppe,' he said; 'the body of a middle-aged man dressed as a small commercial traveller would dress. He had a little money in his pocket, but nothing to identify him. He was buried here in Tver by the police, who received their information by an anonymous postcard posted in Tver. The person who had found the body did not want to be implicated in any inquiry. Now, who found the body? Who was the dead man? Mrs. Sydney Bamborough has assumed that the dead man was her husband; on the strength of that assumption she has

become a princess. A frail foundation upon which to build up her fortunes, eh ?

'How did she know that the body had been found ?' asked De Chauxville, perceiving the weak point in his companion's chain of argument.

'It was reported shortly in the local newspapers,' replied Vassili, 'and repeated in one or two continental journals, as the police were of opinion that the man was a foreigner. Anyone watching the newspapers would see it—otherwise the incident might pass unobserved.'

'And you think,' said De Chauxville, suppressing his excitement with an effort, 'that the lady has risked everything upon a supposition ?'

'Knowing the lady, I do.'

De Chauxville's dull eyes gleamed for a moment with an unwonted light. All the civilisation of the ages will not eradicate the primary instincts of men—and one of these, in good and bad alike, is to protect women. The Frenchman bit the end of his cigarette, and angrily wiped the tobacco from his lips.

'She may have information of which you are ignorant,' he suggested.

'Precisely. It is that particular point which gives me trouble at the present moment. It is that that I wish to discover.'

De Chauxville looked up coolly. He saw his advantage.

'Hence your sudden flow of communicativeness ?' he said. Vassili nodded.

'You cannot find out for yourself, so you seek my help ?' went on the Frenchman.

Again the Russian nodded his head.

'And your price ?' said De Chauxville, drawing in his feet and leaning forward, apparently to study the pattern of the carpet. The action concealed his face. He was saving Etta, and he was ashamed of himself.

'When you have the information you may name your own price,' said the Russian coldly.

There was a long silence. Before speaking De Chauxville turned and took a glass of liqueur from the table. His hand was not quite steady. He raised the glass quickly and emptied it. Then he rose and looked at his watch. The silence was a compact.

'When the lady dined with you in Paris, did she recognise you ?' he asked.

‘Yes ; but she did not know that I recognised her.’

For the moment they both overlooked Steinmetz.

De Chauxville stood reflecting.

‘And your theory,’ he said, ‘respecting Sydney Bamborough—what is it?’

‘If he got away to Nijni and the Volga, it is probable that he is in Eastern Siberia or in Persia at this moment. He has not had time to get right across Asia yet.’

De Chauxville moved towards the door. With his fingers on the handle he paused again.

I leave early to-morrow morning,’ he said.

Vassili nodded, or rather he bowed, in his grand way.

Then De Chauxville went out of the room. They did not shake hands. There is sometimes shame among thieves.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN THE WEB.

‘WHAT I propose is that Catrina takes you for a drive, my dear Baron, with her two ponies.’

The Countess had taken very good care to refrain from making this proposal to Catrina alone. She was one of those mothers who rule their daughters by springing surprises upon them in a carefully-selected company where the daughter is not free to reply.

De Chauxville bowed with outspread hands.

‘If it will not bore Mademoiselle,’ he replied.

The Countess looked at her daughter with an unctuous smile, as if to urge her on to make the most of this opportunity. It was one of the Countess’s chief troubles that she could not by hook or crook involve Catrina in any sort of a love intrigue. She was the sort of mother who would have preferred to hear scandal about her daughter to hearing nothing.

‘If it will not freeze Monsieur,’ replied Catrina, with uncompromising honesty.

De Chauxville laughed in his frank way.

‘I am not afraid of coldness—of the atmosphere, Mademoiselle,’ he replied. ‘I am most anxious to see your beautiful country. It was quite dark during the last hour of my journey last night, and I had snow-sleepiness. I saw nothing.’

'You will see nothing but snow,' said Catrina.

'Which is like the reserve of a young girl,' added the Frenchman. 'It keeps warm that which is beneath it.'

'You need not be afraid with Catrina,' chimed in the Countess, nodding and becking in a manner that clearly showed her assumption to herself of some vague compliment. 'She drives beautifully.' She is not nervous in that way. I have never seen anyone drive like her.'

'I have no doubt,' said De Chauville, 'that Mademoiselle's hands are firm, despite their diminutiveness.'

The Countess was charmed—and showed it. She frowned at Catrina, who remained grave and looked at the clock.

'When would you like to go?' she asked De Chauville, with that complete absence of affectation which the Russian, of all women of the world, alone have mastered in their conversation with men.

'Am I not at your service—now and always?' responded the gallant Baron.

'I hope not,' replied Catrina quietly. 'There are occasions when I have no use for you. Shall we say eleven o'clock?'

'With pleasure. Then I will go and write my letters now,' said the Baron, quitting the room.

'A charming man!' ejaculated the Countess, before the door was well closed.

'A fool,' corrected Catrina.

'I do not think you can say that, dear,' sighed the Countess, more in sorrow than in anger.

'A clever one,' answered Catrina. 'There is a difference. The clever ones are the worst.'

The Countess shrugged her shoulders hopelessly, and Catrina left the room. She went upstairs to her own little den, where the piano stood. It was the only room in the house that was not too warm, for here the window was occasionally opened—a proceeding which the Countess considered scarcely short of criminal.

Catrina began to play, feverishly, nervously, with all the weird force of her nature. She was like a very sick person seeking a desperate remedy—racing against time. It was her habit to take her breaking heart thus to the great masters, to interpret their thoughts in their music, welding their melodies to the needs of her own sorrow. She only had half an hour. Of late music had failed her a little. It had not given her the comfort she had

usually extracted from solitude and the piano. She was in a dangerous humour. She was afraid of trusting herself to De Chauville. The time fled, and her humour did not change. She was still playing when the door opened, and the Countess stood before her flushed and angry, either or both being the effect of stairs upon emotion.

'Catrina!' the elder lady exclaimed. 'The sleigh is at the door, and the Count is waiting. I cannot tell what you are thinking of. It is not everybody who would be so attentive to you. Just look at your hair. Why can't you dress like other girls?'

'Because I am not made like other girls,' replied Catrina—and who knows what bitterness of reproach there was in such an answer from daughter to mother?

'Hush, child!' replied the Countess, whose anger usually took the form of personal abuse. 'You are as the good God made you.'

'Then the good God must have made me in the dark,' cried Catrina, flinging out of the room.

'She will be down directly,' said the Countess Lanovitch to De Chauville, whom she found smoking a cigarette in the hall. 'She naturally—he! he!—wishes to make a careful toilet.'

De Chauville bowed gravely, without committing himself to any observation, and offered her a cigarette, which she accepted. Having achieved his purpose, he did not now propose to convey the impression that he admired Catrina.

In a few moments the girl appeared, drawing on her fur gloves. Before the door was opened the Countess discreetly retired to the enervating warmth of her own apartments.

Catrina gathered up the reins and gave a little cry, at which the ponies leapt forward, and in a whirl of driven snow the sleigh glided off between the pines.

At first there was no opportunity of conversation, for the ponies were fresh and troublesome. The road over which they were passing had not been beaten down by the passage of previous sleighs, so that the powdery snow rose up like dust, and filled the eyes and mouth.

'It will be better presently,' gasped Catrina, wrestling with her fractious little Tartar thoroughbreds, 'when we get out on to the high road.'

De Chauville sat quite still. If he felt any misgiving as to her power of mastering her team he kept it to himself. There

was a subtle difference in his manner towards Catrina when they were alone together, a suggestion of *camaraderie*, of a common interest and a common desire of which she was conscious without being able to put definite meaning to it.

It annoyed and alarmed her. While giving her full attention to the management of the sleigh, she was beginning to dread the first words of this man, who was merely wielding a cheap power acquired in the shady course of his career. There is nothing so disarming as the assumed air of intimate knowledge of one's private thoughts and actions. De Chauxville assumed this air with a skill against which Catrina's dogged strength of character was incapable of battling. His manner conveyed the impression that he knew more of Catrina's inward thoughts than any other living being, and she was simple enough to be frightened into the conclusion that she had betrayed herself to him. There is no simpler method of discovering a secret than to ignore its existence.

It is possible that De Chauxville became aware of Catrina's sidelong glances of anxiety in his direction. He may have divined that silence was more effective than speech.

He sat looking straight in front of him, as if too deeply absorbed in his own thoughts to take even a passing interest in the scenery.

'Why did you come here?' asked Catrina suddenly.

De Chauxville seemed to awake from a reverie. He turned and looked at her in assumed surprise. They were on the high road now, where the snow was beaten down, so conversation was easy.

'But—to see you, Mademoiselle.'

'I am not *that* sort of girl,' answered Catrina coldly. 'I want the truth.'

De Chauxville gave a short laugh and looked at her.

'Prophets and kings have sought the truth, Mademoiselle, and have not found it,' he said lightly.

Catrina made no answer to this. Her ponies required considerable attention. Also, there are some minds like large banking houses—not dealing in small change. That which passes in or out of such minds has its own standard of importance. Such people are not of much use in these days, when we like to touch things lightly, adorning a tale but pointing no moral.

'I would ask you to believe that your society was one incentive to make me accept the Countess's kind hospitality,' the Frenchman observed after a pause.

‘And?’

De Chauxville looked at her. He had not met many women of solid intellect.

‘And?’ repeated Catrina.

‘I have others, of course.’

Catrina gave a little nod and waited.

‘I wish to be near Alexis,’ added De Chauxville.

Catrina was staring straight in front of her. Her face had acquired a habit of hardening at the mention of Paul’s name. It was stone-like now, and set. Perhaps she might have forgiven him if he had loved her once, if only for a little while. She might have forgiven him, if only for the remembrance of that little while. But Paul had always been a man of set purpose, and such men are cruel. Even for her sake, even for the sake of his own vanity, he had never pretended to love Catrina. He had never mistaken gratified vanity for dawning love, as millions of men do. Or perhaps he was without vanity. Some few men are so constructed.

‘Do you love him so?’ asked Catrina, with a grim smile distorting her strong face.

‘As much as you, Mademoiselle,’ replied De Chauxville.

Catrina started. She was not sure that she hated Paul. Towards Etta, there was no mistake in her feeling, and this was so strong that, like an electric current, there was enough of it to pass through the wife and reach the husband.

Passion, like character, does not grow in crowded places. In great cities men are all more or less alike. It is only in solitary abodes that strong natures grow up in their own way. Catrina had grown to womanhood in one of the solitary places of the earth. She had no facile axiom, no powerful precedent to guide her every step through life. The woman who was in daily contact with her was immeasurably beneath her in mental power, in force of character, in those possibilities of love or hatred which go to make a strong life for good or for evil. By the side of her daughter the Countess Lanovitch was as the willow, swayed by every wind, in the neighbourhood of the oak, crooked and still and strong.

‘In Petersburg you pledged yourself to help me,’ said De Chauxville. And although she knew that in the letter this was false, she did not contradict him. ‘I came here to claim fulfilment of your promise.’

The hard blue eyes beneath the fur cap stared straight in front of them. Catrina seemed to be driving like one asleep, for she noted nothing by the roadside. So far as eye could reach over the snowclad plain, through the silent pines, these two were alone in a white, dead world of their own. Catrina never drove with bells. There was no sound beyond the high-pitched drone of the steel runners over the powdery snow. They were alone; unseen, unheard save of that Ear that listens in the waste places of the world.

'What do you want me to do?' she asked.

'Oh, not very much,' answered De Chauxville—a cautious man who knew a woman's humour. Catrina driving a pair of ponies in the clear sharp air of Central Russia, and Catrina playing the piano in the enervating, flower-scented atmosphere of a drawing-room, were two different women. De Chauxville was not the man to mistake the one for the other.

'Not very much, Mademoiselle,' he answered. 'I should like Madame la Comtesse to invite the whole Osterno party to dine, and sleep, perhaps, if one may suggest it.'

Catrina wanted this too. She wanted to torture herself with the sight of Etta, beautiful, self-confident, carelessly cognisant of Paul's love. She wanted to see Paul look at his wife with the open admiration which she had set down as something else than love—something immeasurably beneath love as Catrina understood that passion. Her soul, brooding under a weight of misery, was ready to welcome any change, should it only mean a greater misery.

'I can manage that,' she said, 'if they will come. It was a prearranged matter that there should be a bear-hunt in our forests.'

'That will do,' answered De Chauxville reflectively; 'in a few days, perhaps, if it suits the Countess.'

Catrina made no reply. After a pause she spoke again, in her strange, jerky way.

'What will you gain by it?' she asked.

De Chauxville shrugged his shoulders.

'Who knows?' he answered. 'There are many things I want to know; many questions which can be answered only by one's own observation. I want to see them together. Are they happy?'

Catrina's face hardened.

'If there is a God in heaven, and He hears our prayers, they ought not to be,' she replied curtly.

'She looked happy enough in Petersburg,' said the Frenchman, who never told the truth for its own sake. Whenever he thought that Catrina's hatred needed stimulation he mentioned Etta's name.

'There are other questions in my mind,' he went on, 'some of which you can answer, Mademoiselle, if you care to.'

Catrina's face expressed no great willingness to oblige.

'The Charity League,' said De Chauxville, looking at her keenly; 'I have always had a feeling of curiosity respecting it. Was, for instance, our friend the Prince Pavlo implicated in that unfortunate affair?'

Catrina flushed suddenly. She did not take her eyes from the ponies. She was conscious of the unwonted colour in her cheeks, which was slowly dying away beneath her companion's relentless gaze.

'You need not trouble to reply, Mademoiselle,' said De Chauxville, with his dark smile; 'I am answered.'

Catrina pulled the ponies up with a jerk, and proceeded to turn their willing heads towards home. She was alarmed and disturbed. Nothing seemed to be safe from the curiosity of this man, no secret secure, no prevarication of the slightest avail.

'There are other questions in my mind,' said De Chauxville quietly, 'but not now. Mademoiselle is no doubt tired.'

He leant back, and when at length he spoke it was to give utterance to the trite commonplace of which he made a conversational study.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE CASTLE OF THORS.

A WEEK later Catrina, watching from the window of her own small room, saw Paul lift Etta from the sleigh, and the sight made her clench her hands until the knuckles shone like polished ivory.

She turned and looked at herself in the mirror. No one knew how she had tried one dress after another since luncheon, alone in her two rooms, having sent her maid downstairs. No one knew the bitterness in this girl's heart as she contemplated her own reflection.

She went slowly downstairs to the long, dimly-lighted drawing-room. As she entered she heard her mother's cackling voice.

'Yes, Princess,' the Countess was saying, 'it is a quaint old house; little more than a fortified farm, I know. But my husband's family were always strange. They seem always to have ignored the little comforts and elegancies of life.'

'It is most interesting,' answered Etta's voice, and Catrina stepped forward into the light.

Formal greetings were exchanged, and Catrina saw Etta look anxiously towards the door through which she had just come. She thought that she was looking for her husband. But it was Claude de Chauxville for whose appearance Etta was waiting.

Paul and Steinmetz entered at the same moment by another door, and Catrina, who was talking to Maggie in English, suddenly stopped.

'Ah, Catrina,' said Paul, 'we have broken new ground for you. There was no track from here to Osterno through the forest. I made one this afternoon, so you have no excuse for remaining away now.'

'Thank you,' answered Catrina, withdrawing her cold hand hurriedly from his friendly grasp.

'Miss Delafield,' went on Paul, 'admires our country as much as you do.'

'I was just telling Mademoiselle,' said Maggie, speaking French with an honest English accent.

Paul nodded, and left them together.

'Yes,' the Countess was saying at the other end of the gloomy room; 'yes, we are greatly attached to Thors: Catrina, perhaps, more than I. I have some happy associations, and many sorrowful ones. But then—*mon Dieu!*—how isolated we are!'

'It is rather far from—anywhere,' acceded Etta, who was not attending, although she appeared to be interested.

'Far! Princess, I often wonder how Paris and Thors can be in the same world! Before our—our troubles we used to live in Paris a portion of the year. At least I did, while my poor husband travelled about. He had a hobby, you know, poor man! Humanity was his hobby. I have always found that men who seek to do good to their fellows are never thanked. Have you noticed that? The human race is not grateful *en gros*. There is a little gratitude in the individual, but none in the race.'

'None,' answered Etta absently.

'It was so with the Charity League,' went on the Countess volubly. She paused and looked round with her feeble eyes.

'We are all friends,' she went on; 'so it is safe to mention the Charity League, is it not?'

'No,' answered Steinmetz from the fireplace; 'no, Madame. There is only one friend to whom you may safely mention that.'

'Ah! Bad example!' exclaimed the Countess playfully. 'You are there! I did not see you enter. And who is that friend?'

'The fair lady who looks at you from your mirror,' replied Steinmetz, with a face of stone.

The Countess laughed and shook her cap to one side.

'Well,' she said, 'I can do no harm in talking of such things, as I know nothing of them. My poor husband—my poor mistaken Stepán—placed no confidence in his wife. And now he is in Siberia. I believe he works in a bootmaker's shop. I pity the people who wear the boots; but perhaps he only puts in the laces. You hear, Paul? He placed no confidence in his wife, and now he is in Siberia. Let that be a warning to you—eh, Princess? I hope he tells you everything.'

'Put not your trust in princesses,' said Steinmetz from the hearthrug, where he was still warming his hands, for he had driven Maggie over. 'It says so in the Bible.'

'Princes, profane one!' exclaimed the Countess with a laugh—'princes, not princesses!'

'It may be so. I bow to your superior literary attainments,' replied Steinmetz, looking casually and significantly at a pile of yellow-backed foreign novels on a side-table.

'No,' the Countess went on, addressing her conversation to Etta; 'no, my husband—figure to yourself, Princess—told me nothing. I never knew that he was implicated in this great scheme. I do not know now who else was concerned in it. It was all so sudden, so unexpected, so terrible. It appears that he kept the papers in this very house—in that room through there. It was his study——'

'My dear Countess, silence!' interrupted Steinmetz at this moment, breaking into the conversation in his masterful way and enabling Etta to get away. Catrina at the other end of the room was listening, hard-eyed, breathless. It was the sight of Catrina's face that made Steinmetz go forward. He had not been looking at Catrina, but at Etta, who was perfect in her composure and steady self-control.

'Do you want to enter the boot trade also?' asked Steinmetz cheerfully, in a lowered voice.

'Heaven forbid!' cried the Countess.

'Then let us talk of safer things.'

The short twilight was already brooding over the land. The room, lighted only by small square windows, grew darker and darker until Catrina rang for lamps.

'I hate a dark room,' she said shortly to Maggie.

When De Chauxville came in, a few minutes later, Catrina was at the piano. The room was brilliantly lighted, and on the table gleamed and glittered the silver tea-things. The intermediate meal had been disposed of, but the samovar had been left alight, as is the habit at Russian afternoon teas.

Catrina looked up when the Frenchman entered, but did not cease playing.

'There is no need for introductions, I think,' said the Countess.

'We all know M. de Chauxville,' replied Paul quietly, and the two men exchanged a glance.

De Chauxville shook hands with the new-comers, and, while the Countess prepared tea for him, launched into a long description of the preparations for the bear-hunt of the following day. He addressed his remarks exclusively to Paul, as between enthusiasts and fellow-sportsmen. Gradually Paul thawed a little, and made one or two suggestions which betrayed a deep knowledge and a dawning interest.

'We shall only be three rifles,' said De Chauxville, 'Steinmetz, you, and I; and I must ask you to bear in mind the fact that I am no shot—a mere amateur, my dear Prince. The Countess has been good enough to leave the whole matter in my hands. I have seen the keepers, and I have arranged that they come to-night at eleven o'clock to see us and to report progress. They know of three bears, and are attempting to ring them.'

The Frenchman was really full of information and enthusiasm. There were many details upon which he required Paul's advice, and the two men talked together with less constraint than they had hitherto done. De Chauxville had picked up a vast deal of technical matter, and handled his little knowledge with a skill which bade fair to deprive it of its proverbial danger. He presently left Steinmetz and the Prince engaged in a controversy with the Countess as to a meeting-place at the luncheon-hour.

Maggie and Catrina were at the piano. Etta was looking at a book of photographs.

'A charming house, Princess,' said De Chauxville, in a voice that all could hear while the music happened to be soft. But Catrina's music was more remarkable for strength than for softness.

'Charming,' replied Etta.

The music rose into a swelling burst of harmonious chords.

'I must see you, Princess,' said De Chauxville.

Etta glanced across the room towards her husband and Steinmetz.

'Alone,' added the Frenchman coolly.

Etta turned a page of the album and looked critically into a photograph.

'Must!' she said, with a little frown.

'Must,' repeated De Chauxville.

'A word I do not care about,' said Etta, with raised eyebrows. The music was soft again.

'It is ten years since I held a rifle,' said De Chauxville. 'Ah, Madame, you do not know the excitement. I pity ladies, for they have no sport—no big game.'

'Personally, Monsieur,' answered Etta, with her bright laugh, 'I do not grudge you your big game. Suppose you miss the bear, or whatever it may be?'

'Then,' said De Chauxville, with a brave shrug of the shoulders, 'it is the turn of the bear. The excitement is his—the laugh is with him.'

Catrina's foot was upon the loud pedal again.

'Nevertheless, Madame,' said De Chauxville, 'I make so bold as to use the word. You perhaps know me well enough to be aware that I am rarely bold unless my ground is sure.'

'I should not boast of it,' answered Etta; 'there is nothing to be proud of. It is easy enough to be bold if you are certain of victory.'

'When defeat would be intolerable even a certain victory requires care! And I cannot afford to lose.'

'Lose what?' inquired Etta.

De Chauxville looked at her, but he did not answer. The music was soft again.

'I suppose that at Osterno you set no value upon a bear-skin,' he said after a pause.

'We have many,' admitted Etta. 'But I love fur, or trophies of any description. Paul has killed a great deal.'

'Ah!'

'Yes,' answered Etta, and the music rose again. 'I should like to know,' she went on, 'upon what assumption you make use of a word which does not often—annoy me.'

'I have a good memory, Madame. Besides,' he paused, looking round the room, 'there are associations within these walls which stimulate the memory.'

'What do you mean?' asked Etta in a hard voice. 'The hand holding the album suddenly shook like a leaf in the wind.'

De Chauxville had stood upright, his hand at his moustache, after the manner of a man whose small-talk is exhausted. It would appear that he was wondering how he could gracefully get away from the Princess to pay his devoirs elsewhere.

'I cannot tell you now,' he answered; 'Catrina is watching us across the piano. You must beware, Madame, of those cold blue eyes.'

He moved away, going towards the piano, where Maggie was standing behind Catrina's chair. He was like a woman, inasmuch as he could not keep away from his failures.

'Are you advanced, Miss Delafield?' he asked, with his deferential little bow. 'Are you modern?'

'I am neither; I have no desire for even the cheapest form of notoriety. Why do you ask?' replied Maggie.

'I was merely wondering whether we were to count you among our rifles to-morrow. One never knows what ladies will do next; not ladies—I apologise—women. I suppose it is those who are not by birth ladies who aspire to the proud name of women. The modern Woman—with a capital W—is not a lady—*n'est ce pas!*'

'She does not mind your abuse, Monsieur,' laughed Maggie. 'So long as you do not ignore her, she is happy. But you may set your mind at rest as regards to-morrow. I have never let off a gun in my life, and I am sensible enough not to begin on bears.'

De Chauxville made a suitable reply, and remained by the piano talking to the two young ladies until Etta rose and came towards them. He then crossed to the other side of the room and engaged Paul in the discussion of further plans for the morrow.

It was soon time to dress for dinner, and Etta was forced to forego the opportunity she sought to exchange a word alone with De Chauxville. That astute gentleman carefully avoided allowing her this opportunity. He knew the value of a little suspense.

During dinner and afterwards, when at length the gentlemen

came to the drawing-room, the conversation was of a sporting tendency. Bears, bear-hunting, and bear stories held supreme sway. More than once De Chauxville returned to this subject. Twice he avoided Etta.

In some ways this man was courageous. He delayed giving Etta her opportunity until there was a question of retiring to bed in view of the early start required by the next day's arrangements. It had been finally settled that the three younger ladies should drive over to a woodman's cottage at the far end of the forest, where luncheon was to be served. While this item of the programme was arranged, De Chauxville looked straight at Etta across the table.

At length she had the chance afforded to her, deliberately, by De Chauxville.

'What did you mean?' she asked at once.

'I have received information which, had I known it three months ago, would have made a difference in your life.'

'What difference?'

'I should have been your husband, instead of that thick-headed giant.'

Etta laughed, but her lips were for the moment colourless.

'When am I to see you alone?'

Etta shrugged her shoulders. She had plenty of spirit.

'Please do not be dramatic or mysterious; I am tired. Good-night.'

She rose and concealed a simulated yawn.

De Chauxville looked at her with his sinister smile, and Etta suddenly saw the resemblance which Paul had noted between this man and the grinning mask of the lynx in the smoking-room at Osterno.

'When?' repeated he.

Etta shrugged her shoulders.

'I wish to speak to you about the—Charity League,' said De Chauxville.

Etta's eyes dilated. She made a step or two away from him, but she came back.

'I shall not go to the luncheon to-morrow, if you care to leave the hunt early.'

De Chauxville bowed.

(To be continued.)

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*CLEG KELLY, ARAB OF THE CITY:
HIS PROGRESS AND ADVENTURES.*

BY S. R. CROCKETT,
AUTHOR OF 'THE STICKIT MINISTER,' 'THE RAIDERS,' ETC.

ADVENTURE XIV.

CLEG TURNS DIPLOMATIST

JAMES CALLENDAR, honest man and pillar of the Seceder Kirk, was sitting down to his dinner when Cleg came to his door. The one servant lass whom the Callendars kept was 'tidying' herself for the afternoon, and very much resented having to answer the door for a ragged boy with bare legs.

'Gae 'way, we hae nocht for the likes o' you here!' said she, and would have shut the door upon him.

'No even ceevil mainners,' said Cleg, stepping lightly past her into the little side room, where he knew that Mr. Callendar ordinarily took his meals. The builder was just putting a potato into his mouth. He was so surprised to see Cleg enter unannounced, that the fork with the round, well-buttered, new potato remained poised in mid-air.

Cleg plunged into his affairs without preamble, lest he should be captured from behind and ignominiously expelled. But the trim servant merely listened for a moment at the back of the door, to make sure that the intruder had some genuine business with her master, and then returned to the graver duties of her own toilet. It was her evening out, and her 'young man' had hinted at a sail to Aberdeen on the pleasure-boat, if they could get to the West Pier in time.

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'Oh, Maister Callendar,' Cleg began, eager and breathless, 'ye hae been a kind man to me, and I want ye to help me noo——'

'What's this, Cleg?' said the builder; 'surely the police are not after you?'

Cleg shook his head.

'Nor your faither gotten off?'

Again and more vigorously Cleg shook his head, smiling a little as he did so.

'Oh, then,' said the builder, much relieved, carrying the suspended potato to his mouth, 'it can be naething very dreadful. But when ye came in like that on me, I declare that I thoct the wood-yaired was on fire!'

Then Cleg proceeded with his tale. He told how the Kavannahs had been deserted by their father, who had gone to look for work in Liverpool. He sketched with the inevitable realism of the street-boy the career of Sal Kavannah. He stated in plain language the fate that threatened Vara. He described Sal's treatment of Hugh.

'And she battered her ain bairn till the blood ran on the floor. She tossed the bairn against the wall till its arm was near broke. She never hears her wee bit wean greetin' for the milk without cursing it. Will ye turn them away to gang back to a' that?'

This was Cleg's climax, and very artfully he had worked up to it. The builder, good man, was troubled. The tale spoiled the relish of his new potatoes, and it was the first time he had had them that year. He turned with some little asperity upon Cleg.

'But I dinna see what I can do,' he said; 'I canna tak' them here into my house. The mistress wadna alloo it.'

It was the first time he had referred to the ruler of his fortunes, who at that moment was declaring to an acquaintance that she paid two shillings a week less for her rooms than her friend in the next pew at church. 'And how she can afford it is mair than I can tell.' It was no wonder that honest Mr. Callendar said that his wife would not allow him to bring the Kavannahs within his door.

'But,' said Cleg, 'if you will let them bide in the auld hut at the back o' the yaired, where naebody gangs, I can easy get ither lodgings. They'll meddle wi' naething, and I ken whaur to get wark for the lassie, when she's fit for it.'

Mr. Callendar considered. It was a good deal to ask, and he had no guarantee for the honesty of his new tenants but the good word of the son of a thief who had squatted on his property.

'Weel, Cleg,' he said at last, with his quiet humoursome smile coming back to his lips, 'they can bide, gin ye are willing to come surety for them.'

Cleg jumped up with a shout and a wave of his bonnet, which brought the trim servant to the back of the door in consternation.

'I kenned ye wadna turn them awa'—I kenned it, man!' he cried.

Then Cleg realised where he was, and his enthusiasm subsided as suddenly as it rose.

'I shouldna behave like this on a carpet,' he said, looking apologetically at the dusty pads his bare-feet had left on the good Kidderminster.

He was on the eve of departing when the builder called him back. He had been turning things over in his mind.

'I hae anither wood-yard doon by Echo Bank,' he said. 'There's a cubby-hole there you could bide in, gin ye had a blanket.'

'That's nocht,' answered Cleg, 'in this weather. And thank ye kindly. I can do brawly without a blanket.'

And he sped out as he came, without troubling the maid, who was wearying for her master to be done with his dinner and take himself away to his office.

The good news was conveyed directly to Vara, and then she set Cleg's hut in order with a quieter heart. Cleg showed them where to get water, and it was not long before the bairns were established in a safety and comfort they had been strangers to all their lives.

But Cleg was not done with his day's work for the Kavannahs. He went down to the Hillside Works and saw the watchman, after he had delivered his tale of evening papers.

'D'ye think,' he said diplomatically, 'that there's ony chance for a lassie to get wark here?'

The watchman shook his head.

'There's nae room for ony but the relations o' them that's warkin' here already.'

The watchman could be as diplomatic as Cleg. He had daughters of his own growing up, and, though he was willing to be a friend to Cleg, it was against his principles to encourage the introduction into 'our works' of alien blood. There was a tradition at Hillside that every old servant got his daughters 'in' as a matter of course. Indeed, matrimonial alliances were often arranged on that basis, and the blessing of children was looked upon as equivalent to the supreme blessing of money in the bank.

'But I dare say ye micht see Maister Donald,' said the watchman, relenting. He remembered that he had no daughters that could be ready for a few years yet; and besides, Cleg was a good friend of his. 'But what ken ye aboot lassies? My sang, but ye are early begun, my lad. Ye'll rue it some day.'

Cleg smiled, but disdained an answer. He was not argie-bargiein' at present, as he would have said. He was waiting to get a job for Vara Kavannah. In another minute he found himself in the presence of Mr. Donald Iverach, junior partner in the firm of Iverach & Company, whose position in the paper trade and special eminence in the production of the higher grades of foreign correspondence were acknowledged even by rivals—as the senior partner wrote when he was preparing the advertisement for the firm's yearly almanack.

Mr. Donald Iverach was not in the best of humours. He had hoped to be playing 'pocket-handkerchief tennis,' of which he had grown inordinately fond, upon the lawn of Aurelia Villa. But it so happened that he had been required to supply his father upon the morrow with important data concerning the half-yearly balance. For this reason he had to remain in the dreary office in the South Back. This jumped ill with the desires of the junior partner, who was at present so very junior a partner that his share of the profits was only a full and undivided fiftieth—'amply sufficient, however,' as his father said many times over, 'and much more than ever I had at your age, with a wife and family to keep.'

'I wish I had!' said the reckless Donald, when he had heard this for the twentieth time, not knowing what he said.

'Donald, you are a young fool!' said his father. Which, of course, materially helped things.

Now the temper of Mr. Donald Iverach was specially tried on this occasion, for he had good reason to believe that a picturesque cousin of Cecilia's from London, who had been invalided home from some ridiculous little war or other, was playing pocket-handkerchief tennis at Aurelia Villa that evening in place of himself.

So his greeting to Cleg was curt indeed, as he looked up with his pen in his fingers from the last estimate of 'goods returned damaged'—an item which always specially annoyed his father.

'What do you want, boy?' he said, with a glance at the tattered trousers with one 'gallus' showing across the blue shirt, which represented Cleg's entire summer wear.

'Hae ye ony licht job ye could gie a clever and wullin' lassie

the morn?' said Cleg, who knew that the way to get a thing is to ask for it.

'What lassie?' said the junior partner indifferently.

'A lassie that has nae faither or mither,' said Cleg—'worth speakin' aboot,' he added as an afterthought.

'We are full up,' said Donald Iverach, balancing himself upon one leg of his stool. For his father was old-fashioned, and despised the luxury of stuffed chairs as not in keeping with a sound, old-fashioned conservative business.

Cleg looked disappointed.

'It wad be an awsome graund thing for the lassie if she could get a job here,' said Cleg sadly.

'Another time,' replied the junior partner, turning to his desk. To him the case and application were as fifty more. He only wished the manager had been at hand to refer the case to. Donald was like most of his kindly fellow-creatures. He liked to have his nasty jobs done by deputy. Which is one reason why the law is a lucrative profession.

Cleg was at the door, his head sunk so low that it was nearly between his feet. But at the very out-going, with the great brass handle in his fingers, he tried once more.

'Aweel,' he said, without taking his eyes off the brown matting on the floor, 'I'll e'en hae to gang and tell Miss Tennant aboot it. She wull be desperate vexed!'

The junior partner swung round on his stool and called, 'Hey! boy, stop!'

But Cleg was already outside.

'Call that boy back!' he shouted to the watchman, leaping to the door with sudden agility and astonishing interest.

Cleg returned with the same dejected mien and abased eyes. He stood, the image of sorrow and disappointment, upon the cooco-nut matting.

'Whom did you say you would tell?' said Donald Iverach, in a tone in his voice quite different from his business one.

'Only Miss Tennant—a freend o' mine,' said Cleg, with incomparable meekness and deference.

'Miss Tennant of Aurelia Villa?' broke in the eager youth.

'Aye, juist her,' said Cleg dispassionately. 'She learns us aboot Jacob and Esau—and aboot Noah,' he added as if upon consideration. He would have mentioned more of the patriarchs if he could have remembered them at the time. His choice of names

did not spring from either preference or favouritism. So he added Noah to show that there was no ill-feeling in the matter.

'And Miss Tennant is your friend?' queried the young man.

Cleg nodded. He might have added that sometimes, as in one great ploy yet to be described, he had been both teacher and friend to Miss Celie Tennant.

'Tell your lassie to be here at breakfast-time to-morrow morning, and to be sure and ask for Mr. Donald Iverach,' was all the junior partner remarked.

And Cleg said demurely, 'Thank you, sir.'

But as Cleg went out he thought a great deal of additional matter, and when he said his adieus to the watchman he could hardly contain himself. Before he was fairly down the steps, he yelled three times as loud as he could, and turned Catherine-wheel after Catherine-wheel, till at the last turn he came down with his bare feet in the waist-belt of a policeman. The good-natured officer solemnly smacked the convenient end of Cleg with a vast plantigrade palm, and restored him to the stature and progression of ordinary humanity, with a reminder to behave—and to mind where he was coming if he did not want to get run in.

But even this did not settle Cleg.

'O Keelies!' he cried, as if he had been addressing a large company of his fellows, 'wasna it rare to see him loup off that stool, like a yellow paddock into the canal.'

And Cleg, who scorned the eccentricities of love in more mature bosoms even when he traded upon the resultant weaknesses, went off into an ecstasy of mocking laughter.

ADVENTURE XV.

THE FIRE IN CALLENDAR'S YARD.

VARA KAVANNAH went daily to the factory at Hillside. She was but a slip of a thing, yet she soon learned the work that fell to her share, and developed marvellous quickness in passing the thin quires of foreign paper, examining them for flaws and dirt, and rejecting the faulty sheets.

The girls were mostly kind to her, though they teased her about her name. And, indeed, in a world of Maggies and Jeanies, her Christian name appeared somewhat strange. But Vara had a

reverence for it, because it had been her single legacy from her father, the gentle and imaginative Sheemus, who had found married life so different from his hopes that he had been brought at last to try that bitter pass of flight, through which so many have gone to find a new life on the other side.

These were pleasant evenings in the wooden hut. Cleg generally dropped in to see his sub-tenants after his papers were delivered. Then he would potter about, watering the flowers, which now began to bloom bravely in spite of the city heat and the dust of the yard. Vara had a seam or a stocking, and sat at the outside of the door on a creeper stool.

Hugh learned to nurse Gavin on his knee or to rock him in the old cradle which the kindly foreman of the yard, a widower, had lent to Vara, saying, 'I'm no needin' it the noo—no for a year or twa at ony rate.'

He was a 'seeking' widower, and did not make the presentation absolute because he was a far-sighted man, and one never knew what might happen. As for Vara, she seemed to shoot up in stature every day, and the curves of her wasted and abused body filled out. Her face again grew merry and bright, and she was ready to take her share in mirthful talk. But sometimes her eyes were sad and far away. Then she was thinking of her father, the gentle Sheemus; and she longed greatly to go to meet him in Liverpool, when the ill days should have overpassed and there was no mother any more in her life.

In the Works Vara gained the friendship of her companions, though she was younger than most of them. A tall girl, who was much looked up to in the mill because she sang in a choir, stood firmly her friend. And the two, Agnes Ramsay and little Vara, used to walk home together. Vara was anxious that Cleg should apply for a situation for himself at the Works; but Cleg preferred his untrammelled freedom, and continued to deliver his papers and sleep in the yard at Echo Bank all through the summer.

It was mid-August and the sky shone like copper. There was a peculiar dunness in the air, and light puffs of burning wind came in, hot and unrefreshing, from the walls and pavement in the afternoon. But when the girls came home 'on the back of air,' as they said, the air had grown cooler, and Agnes and Vara often lingered a little in the great 'saal,' or work-room, in order to let the press of girls well down the street before them, and so be rid of the rough chaff of the lads as they passed home.

But this evening, as they came leisurely out, arm linked in arm, Vara saw a great crowd blocking up the way in front of the clock which gave the time to the works, and with a quick clutch at her companion's arm she would have drawn her away.

But Agnes Ramsay saw a woman furiously attacking the manager, and pushed forward to get a better view. Vara knew too well what it meant. Her enemy had found her. She tried to steal away, but it seemed impossible to move. With a cry of anger Sal Kavannah recognised her daughter, and threshed a way through the crowd to reach her. Vara stood still, white to the lips. Her mother seized her by the neck of her dress and began to shake her, striking her about the face and shoulders with foul names and blasphemous words.

'Brazen besom,' she cried; 'you and your "Keelie" stole my bairns frae me. Where have you hidden them? Ye think I canna find oot. But I can track them as I tracked you. Aff wi' that dress, you slut. It's ower guid for the like o' you, and me trapesin' in a gown like this. Take it off, I say, and give me back my children.'

Vara stood mute and silent under the storm of oaths. The manager would have sent for the police, but knowing that Vara was a *protégée* of Mr. Donald's, he went within, leaving them (as he said) to fight it out.

Then Agnes Ramsay pulled the shrinking girl away from her mother, and so turned the abuse upon herself. But Agnes was a well-grown girl, and, being supported by half-a-hundred of her companions, she stood her ground valiantly.

'Run,' she said, 'run, lassie, while ye can. She doesna ken yet where ye bide.'

So like a hunted hare Vara turned and ran. But when she reached the little wooden house, so trim and quiet, with its fragrant wood-yard about it, and the daisies and pansies in the little plots and diamond-shaped patches which Cleg had made, the bitterness of her heart broke up within her, like the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep.

Little Hugh came trotting to her, waving a red flag, the latest gift of the widower foreman, in his hand. 'Vara, Vara,' he cried, 'Gavin can say "Dadda," and I nursed him good as gold all day.'

The tears were running down Vara's face. She went in without power of speech and sat by the babe's cot. He was asleep, and she laid her wet cheek on the pillow beside his and sobbed. Hugh

kept a little way off, not knowing what to make of the unknown sorrow. Then he came softly up to her, and gave her sleeve a little pull.

'Vara,' he said, 'here's a seetie.'

For Hugh understood no sorrow which a sweetie would not make better.

'I can never go back to the Works,' sobbed Vara. 'I am disgraced before them all. I can never face them—never!'

About seven Cleg came over the waste ground joyfully, having disposed of his papers. He sat silent while Vara told him of the terrible evening at the gate of Hillside, and of all her shame and terror. Cleg whistled very softly to himself, as he always did when he was thinking deeply.

'Wait here this ae nicht,' he said. 'I am watching with anither man at the corner o' the Grange where they hae the road up. I'll think it oot in the shelter. Keep up your heart, Vara—we'll win through yet.'

But Vara would not be comforted. She would not even raise her head to bid him say 'Guid nicht.'

So, still more softly whistling, Cleg departed.

He was not great company that night for the man in the shelter, one 'Tyke' Tweedie—a man who had once been a soldier for three months, before being bought off by his father, who had regretted the transaction ever since. 'Tyke' was a man of battles. By his own account he had been in the Crimea. He was great upon 'the Hichts o' Almy.' He described the joint career of himself and the victorious Sir Colin Campbell, concluding his epic with, 'Then we charged the enemy and carriet a' afore us, till we garred the Russian chiefls rin like stour!'

But Tyke had a poor listener that night, though he never knew it. For Cleg sat silent, and only by a nod did he acknowledge his interest when Tyke had come to the crisis of one of his famous narrations.

The policeman on the beat would sometimes stop and look over the windward edge of the shelter. 'Hae ye gotten to the battle o' the Inkermann yet?' he would ask.

'Na, Rob,' Tyke would reply, 'we are aye on the Hichts o' Almy yet! Dear, sirce, but it was a sare, sare job. Ye see, there was me and Sir Colin, and wi' that we at them sword in hand——'

And the policeman would stroll away from the glow of the fire, out under the stars—alone save for the transient rake-hell cat

skirmishing across from area-railing to area-railing, and the tramp of a brother officer coming up sombre and subdued from far down the hill.

But about one of the clock, when the night was verging to its stillest, Cleg looked up and saw the stars overhead thinning out.

'It's never morning already!' he said, rubbing his eyes, for he had not half solved the hard problem of Vara Kavannah.

He stepped out of the shelter. All the heaven to the north was a-flicker with the skarrow of fire.

Without a word to the now drowsy Tyke, nodding over the blackening cinders in his grated brazier, Cleg Kelly set off at his top speed towards the fire, to be in at the death. 'It's surely in the Pleasance,' he said to himself as he ran. The flame towered mightily clear and clean, without sparks or crackling as when houses burn.

'It's Callendar's yaird!' said Cleg again, and never in his life had he run so fast. For there in the midst of the timber was the little wooden house in which were lying asleep little Vara Kavannah and her baby brothers.

It was indeed Callendar's wood-yard. When Cleg arrived there were whole regiments of firemen playing upon the flames; but his experienced eyes saw at once that the case was hopeless. Indeed, the officer in charge had come to the same conclusion some time before, and he was now directing the solid streams of water towards such surrounding properties as seemed in danger of catching fire.

The crowds were kept back by police, and all was orderly. The owner of all stood patiently at the gate, talking matters over with his foreman. After all, it was the visitation of God, and, further, he was fully insured. It is a great thing to be prepared for affliction.

Into the black mass of the onlookers Cleg darted. He wormed his way round to the back. He crossed a wall on which three or four boys were roosting.

'Ye'll get nabbed if ye gang that road,' cried one of them, giving Cleg 'the office' in the friendliest way, though he belonged to quite another gang.

But Cleg sped on. He dived between the long legs of his former friend, the red-headed officer known as 'Longshanks.' He skimmed across the yard among the falling sparks, dodging the

flames which shot out of the burning piles to intercept him, as if they had been policemen.

The little wooden house lay before him in the red heart of the fire. He saw the daisies growing in his own garden plots. He remembered that, in the hurry and distress of listening to Vara's story, he had not watered them that day.

But he dashed for the door, opened it eagerly, and fell forward across the floor. The hut was filled with the odour of burning. Shooting flames met him in the face as he rose; but nevertheless he groped all about the tiny room, getting his hands and arms burned as he did so. The children were not there—Vara, Hugh, and the baby—all were gone! He turned to the door. The thing that he had stumbled over was a body. He turned over the lump with his bare foot. It was soft, heavy, and smelled of whisky. Cleg had found Sal Kavannah in the home he had made to protect her children from her search. He had little doubt that it was she who had set the yard on fire and stumbled in here afterwards.

Cleg stood a moment wondering whether he would not do better to leave her where she was; and more than once since that night has the same thought crossed his mind. He still fears that in dragging her away by the feet from the burning hut he unduly interfered with the working of the designs of an all-wise Providence.

ADVENTURE XVI.

IN THE KEY OF BOY NATURAL.

In time and under a new superintendent Cleg Kelly went back to Hunker Court Sunday School, some time after the loss of his friends the Kavannahs. This is equivalent to saying that Hunker Court became again an exceedingly lively place of instruction and amusement on a Sabbath afternoon. It is true that Cleg was not always present, and when he was absent his teacher's heart sent up a silent thanksgiving. That, of course, was before Miss Cecilia Tennant took him in hand.

Cleg had several teachers before he found his fate. He was, in fact, the crux of the school, and every aspiring young neophyte who 'took a class' was provided with a nut to crack in the shape of Cleg. But he never cracked him.

The superintendent of Hunker Court at the date of this first

pilgrimage was a somewhat ineffective gentleman, whose distinguishing trait was that he appeared to be of a pale sandy complexion all over. That is, all of him not covered by a tightly-buttoned black surtout. His name was Samson Langpenny. Why it was so, is historically uncertain—'Langpenny,' probably, owing to his connection with his father. But 'Samson' is wholly inexplicable, and was certainly exceedingly hard upon Master Langpenny as a boy. For it procured him many lickings at that delightful season, owing to logic of the usual schoolboy type and cogency.

'Jock, ye dinna ken wha was the strongest man?'

'It's a lee, I do ken. It was Samson!'

'Na, then it juist isna, for I lickit Samson this mornin mysel!'

The second boy thought this over a moment—saw it—considered it rather good.

'Dod,' he said, 'I wad like to could say that mysel'. I can lick Samson mysel' as weel as Pate Tamson!'

Whereupon he went and lurked for Samson till that unfortunate youth came along. Then he triumphantly established his claim to be the strongest man by once more thrashing 'Samson' Langpenny, while the tears of the first combat were hardly yet dry upon the cuff of the coat-sleeve which Master Langpenny ordinarily used instead of a pocket-handkerchief.

It was quite in accordance with the contrariness of things, that Samson Langpenny should develop into the superintendent of the roughest Sunday School in all the South Side of Edinburgh. He had now a real handkerchief, as every one might see, for he wore about equal parts of it within his pocket and without. The lower and unseen portion was the working end. Now, there may be excellent moral purpose in a judiciously-used pocket-handkerchief. There is, indeed, a certain literary man whose wife avers that her husband's toilet consists ordinarily of 'four paper knives, four pens, and no pocket-handkerchief.' But this person is not usually held up in Sunday Schools as a shining example. Quite the contrary.

Now, Cleg Kelly had no great personal grievance against his superintendent. But he said in his vulgar way (for there is no doubt that he was that kind of boy) that 'he did not cotton to that wipe o' Langpenny's!'

Cleg's present teacher was a young gentleman of the name of Percy Somerville, whose principal reasons for teaching in Hunker

Court were that he might improve the minds of the youth of the district, and that he might have a fair chance of seeing Miss Cecilia Tennant home across the meadows. This last was a pleasant thing to do at any time, but specially desirable in the summer season, after the heat and turmoil of Hunker Court. And, on this account, Samson Langpenny never lacked for recruits to his teaching staff at that time.

Now, Percy Somerville was 'a very nice boy'—these were Miss Tennant's own words. 'But, you know—well, you know—after all, he is only a boy.'

And, in addition, as they say in political circles, when the leadership of the party is in question, 'there was no vacancy.' The junior partner still lived.

Now Percy Somerville undoubtedly had his troubles, owing chiefly to Celie Tennant's hardness of heart; but they were as nothing to the difficulties which afflicted Samson Langpenny.

For instance, it was in this wise that Mr. Percy Somerville was greeted, as he appeared with a reluctant scholar who had been detected in trying to escape by the side door after the roll had been marked. (It was drawing near the time of the summer treat into the country, so it behoved the teachers to be careful in marking attendances.)

'Go it, Pierce-eye! Hit him one in the eye!'

This exclamation was traced afterwards to Cleg Kelly's acquaintance in day-school with a baleful ballad included in the *Royal Poetry Book*, and intituled 'Chevy Chase.'

Mr. Somerville thereupon promptly lost his rightful and given name, and became to all eternity—or so long, at least, as he remained at Hunker Court—'Old One-in-the-Eye.'

But it so happened that, on this particular Sunday, Cleg's teacher with the pugnacious title was absent; and, in despite of the notice prominently placarded on the walls behind the superintendent's desk, he was absent without having provided a substitute.

There was nothing for it, therefore, but that Samson Langpenny should take the class himself. And he would as soon have faced a battery of artillery as a class in which sat the Egyptian plague of his school, Cleg Kelly. It was, indeed, on this particular day that there came to Samson the resolution to try him with Miss Celie Tennant as a last resource, previous to a second and final expulsion.

Indeed, he would have chosen the latter alternative long ago, but for a well-grounded inward belief that, at the close of the hour after Cleg's compulsory exit, there would not be a whole pane of glass in all the many windows of Hunker Court Sunday School. He remembered well as a teacher the awful scene which accompanied the first expulsion under the reign of 'Pund o' Candles'—a scene which since his return had made Cleg almost idolised by the scholars of Hunker Court.

Samson Langpenny sat down to teach the Border Ruffians of the Sooth Back—Cleg Kelly's class. Now he was out of place, and knew it. His true sphere in a Sunday School was in the infant department; where, with a packet of butterscotch and 'Hush-a-bye, Baby!' he might have been a great and shining success.

Why the minister did not see this was a standing problem in Hunker Court. But, as the teachers said one to another on their several ways home:

'It is so hard to get the minister to see anything—and as for his wife—'

'Can you say your Psalm—metrical version?' asked Samson Langpenny, as though of a certainty they were all letter-perfect in the prose version.

'I can,' said Cleg Kelly promptly.

'Then,' said Samson, smiling, well-pleased, 'we will take you last.'

With various hitches and shoves, the awkward and unruly class bored its way through the Psalm—'metrical version.' An impartial observer might have noticed that the teacher contributed about ninety-five per cent. of the recitation in the form of hints and suggestions. Nevertheless, each boy, having completed his portion, sat back with a proud consciousness that he had done his duty with even needless promptitude and accuracy. Also it was an established canon of the place that so soon as each boy was released from the eye of the teacher, he instantly put his hand slyly under the bench. Then he either nipped his neighbour in a place which made the sufferer take an instant interest in the circumstance, or else he incontinently stuck a pin into him.

In either case the boy assaulted remarked: 'OUCH! please sir, Tam Rogerson's nippin' me. Wull ye speak to him?'

But this was only the usual routine, and provoked no remark.

When, however, the superintendent came to Cleg Kelly, and that diligent young student began at once to reel off the twenty-third

Psalm with vivacity and despatch—the psalm which the entire body of Scottish youth learns long before the A, B, C—it was obviously time to interfere.

‘If ye please, sir (or whether or no), that’s no the richt yin!’ said Tam Rogerson, who ran Cleg close for the place of honour as the ‘warst loon i’ the schule!’ This was a post of as great distinction at Hunker Court as the position of clown in a circus.

Cleg’s answer was twofold.

To Tam Rogerson he remarked—under his breath, it is true, but with startling distinctness—

‘Wait till I get you oot, ma man; I’ll warm you.’

And Tam Rogerson grew hot from head to foot, for he knew that he was as good as warmed already.

On the other hand, Cleg gave the answer of peace to his teacher:

‘Please, sir, Maister Langshanks—penny, I mean—my faither is a Papish—an’ he winna let me learn ony ither psalm but the three-an’-twunty. But I hae learned HER to richts!’

After this exhibition of the rights of the nonconforming conscience in strange places, Cleg continued his lesson in Hunker Court under the vague tutelage of Samson Langpenny. Now Samson was unaware of the strong feeling of resentment which was gathering in the bosoms of his scholars, owing to the length of his ‘introductory exercises.’ The Psalm and the ‘questions’ were all in the day’s work, but Samson introduced a prayer in the middle of the teaching hour, which Cleg Kelly considered to be wholly uncalled for and indeed little short of impious.

So, as soon as Samson shut his eyes, Cleg silently joined the class nearest him, and the other scholars of the absent Mr. Somerville did likewise. When Samson opened his eyes and awoke to the state of the case, he found himself wholly without a single scholar to whom instruction could be given.

Cleg had betaken himself to the class of Miss Robina Semple, an excellent maiden lady of much earnestness and vigour. She was so busy explaining the Scripture lesson, that she did not at first observe the addition to the number of her scholars in the wholly undesirable person of Master Kelly.

The lesson was the parable of the lame man at the pool of Siloam.

Now in Miss Semple’s class there was a lame boy named Chris Cullen. He sat listening with strained attention and invincible eagerness to every word which fell from his teacher. Cleg, to whom

all lessons were much alike, listened also—chiefly, it may be, because he saw the reflection of an angel's smile on the face of the lame boy, Chris Cullen.

'What gars ye hearken like that, Chris?' whispered Cleg, with some anxiety. Only the news of a prize fight would have brought such an expression of interest to his own face, or (it might be) the announcement that his father had got ten years.

'It's aboot a man that got a dook, an' then he could walk!' said Chris, speaking hurriedly over his shoulder, being anxious not to miss a word.

'What hindered him to dook afore?' asked Cleg.

'He couldna get doon to the water-edge,' said Chris.

'Was the bobby there?' persisted Cleg, to whom the limit of where he might not go or might not do coincided with the beat of the officers of Her Majesty's peace.

'*Wheesht!*' interjected Chris Cullen, 'she's telling it the noo!'

For the lame boy, his teacher existed for this purpose alone.

The calm, high voice of Miss Robina Semple went on—Robina Semple, whom some called 'a plain old maid'—

'And so the poor man, who had no one to carry him down to the edge when the angel troubled the water, had to stay where he was, and somebody else got in before him! Are you not sorry for him?'

'Never heed, Chris Cullen,' broke in Cleg, 'I'll cairry ye doon on my back mysel'! There's naebody will daur to hinder ye dookin' in ony dub ye like, when I'm cairryin' ye!'

Cleg Kelly was certainly acquiring, by contact if in no other way, certain Christian ideas. For the rest he was still frankly pagan.

Now at this particular date Hunker Court Sabbath School was run under a misapprehension. It was the idea of the superintendent that a little sugared advice would tame the young savages of the courts and wynds. Hence the hour of instruction was largely taken up with confused sound and fury. Samson would have been wiser if he had suborned a prize-fighter of good moral principles to teach the young idea of Hunker Court how to shoot head foremost out at the door. Under these circumstances it is conceivable that some good might have been done. But as it was, under the placid consulship of Samson Langpenny, teachers and scholars alike had a good deal of physical exercise of an interesting and healthful sort. But the moral and religious improvement was certainly to seek.

Yet in the class of Miss Semple, that excellent woman and good teacher of youth, there was one scholar who that Sunday had heard to profit. It was Cleg Kelly. He carried home little Chris Cullen on his shoulders, and if no angel stirred the waters of the gutter puddles as these two went their way, and if no immediate healing resulted, both Chris and Cleg were the better for the lesson of the troubling of the waters.

Even Samson Langpenny did not go to Hunker Court that day in vain, for he went along with Chris and Cleg part of the way home. Pride was not among Samson's failings, and, as we know, bashfulness was equally absent from the black catalogue of the sins of our hero.

'What for are you carrying Chris?' asked Samson Langpenny, who, though he had many weaknesses, had also large and sufficient virtues of earnestness and self-sacrifice.

'Weel, ye see, sir,' said Cleg, trotting alongside cheerily, his burden upon his shoulders, 'it's true that Chris can gang himself'. But ye ken yersel' gin the laddies are verra ceevil when they get oot o' schule. They micht knock the wee yin ower. But when he is up on my shoothers, they juist darena'. My certes, but I wad like to fa' acquaint wi' the yin that wad as muckle as lift a "paver" to him. I wad "paver" him!'

The superintendent smiled, though as a general rule he deprecated an appeal to arms. Cleg had also a little sound advice to offer his superior.

'Ye dinna lick aneuch in your schule, Maister!' continued Cleg, for he was unselfishly desirous that everyone should succeed in the sphere of life to which Providence had called him. He did not, it is true, see any great reason for a man's having taken to keeping Sunday School. Summer treats in the country might surely have been given without them—likewise tea *soirées*. But since these things had been mixed up together, the instruction part, however unnecessary, should certainly be carried out in a workmanlike fashion.

'Not lick enough?' queried the superintendent, aghast. He thought he could not have heard aright—the pest of Hunker Court counselling corporal punishment!

'Aye, an' div ye ken,' Cleg went on, 'div ye ken I can tell ye, wha ye could get to keep the laddies as quate as pussy.'

The superintendent looked at the rebel Head Centre of Hunker Court, bending with the weight of Chris Cullen upon his shoulders.

It did not strike him that Cleg might also be able to support his own crippled steps upon his willing heathen shoulders.

'What would you advise?' he asked at last, with a certain pathetic humility.

'There's a maister at oor day schule that's awsome handy wi' the taws, an' a' the laddies are feared o' him. He comes to your kirk—I hae seen him gang in the door. Ye might get him for a teacher in yer Sabbath schule! Then the boys wad hae to be quait. His name's MacRobb.'

'Why would the boys have to be quiet then?' said Samson Langpenny, who did not yet understand what his ragged mentor was driving at.

'Dinna ye see, sir,' said Cleg eagerly, 'the boys daurna play their capers on Sabbaths at Hunker Court, an' gang to his schule on Mondays. Na, he wad fair skin them alive. It wad mak' an awfu' differ to you, sir.'

'But I do not know Mr. MacRobb,' said Samson; 'how can I get him to give up his Sabbath afternoons to teach in such a noisy place? He will say that he gets enough of teaching through the week.'

'Gae way!' said Cleg in his vernacular, forgetting for the moment to whom he spoke, 'gae way, man! Get bonny Miss Tennant, the lass in the yella frock, to speer him. He'll come fast aneuch then. He does naething else in the kirk but glower at her a' the time the minister's preaching.'

Thus Cleg jested with love, and used its victims at his pleasure.

ADVENTURE XVII.

THE KNUCKLE DUSTERS.

SOON after this Cleg Kelly became a member of a young lady's class, in a manner which has been elsewhere related.¹

That young lady was Miss Cecilia Tennant, otherwise known as Celie—a young lady much admired by all who knew her (and by some who did not, but wanted to); and especially admired by Mr. Donald Iverach, junior partner in the firm on whose premises the class was held. I have also related the tragical events which preceded the formation of the boys' class, organised under the guidance

¹ *The Stickit Minister*, p. 192.

and tutelage of Cleg Kelly. But it soon became evident that something more than a night class was necessary, if any impression were to be made on the wild Arabs of the Sooth Back.

'Ye see the way o' it is this, Miss Celie,' Cleg explained. 'Ye canna keep a boy frae ill-doing by juist telling him aboot Jacob for an hour in the week. There's a' day in the shop, wi' the gaffer swearin' blue murder even on, an' ill-talk an' ither things that I juist canna tell ye. Then there's every nicht, when we drap work. What can we do but stand about the streets, or start the Gang an' look aboot us for a bobby to chivvy, or else for something handy for "liftin'?"'

'But, Cleg,' cried Celie, much alarmed, 'surely I do not understand you to say that you *steal*?''

'Na,' said Cleg, 'we dinna steal. We only "nick" things whiles!'

Celie had heard, indeed, of the 'mobs,' the 'unions,' the 'gangs,' the 'crowds.' But she thought them simply amiable and rather silly secret societies, such as her own brothers used to make a great deal of unnecessary secrecy about—calling themselves 'Bloody Bill of the Ranch,' 'Navajo Tommy,' and other stupid names. She had remarked the same mania in Cleg sometimes, and had some reason to believe that all boys are alike, whatever may be their station in life.

But Cleg soon put his friend out of the danger of any such mistake.

'Mind, say "*As sure as daith*," an' ye'll cut your throat gin ye tell,' said Cleg, very earnestly, 'an' I'll tell ye, aye, an' make ye a member!'

Cleg was about to reveal state secrets, and he did not want to run any risks. Celie promised faithfully the utmost discretion.

'Weel, Miss Celie, I can see that ye are no gaun to do muckle guid amang us boys, if I dinna tell ye. An' I want ye no to believe ony lees, like what are telled to the ministers an' folk like them. There's mair ill in the Sooth Back than can be pitten richt wi' a track. I canna bide them tracks——'

The distribution of tracts was an old grievance of Cleg's. But Celie earnestly and instantly put him on the plain way again, for if he once began upon 'tracks,' there was no telling if ever she would get any nearer to her promised lesson on the good and evil of the boys' unions.

Celie found herself as eager as ever was her first mother Eve, to eat of the tree of the forbidden knowledge.

'Gie us your han', Miss Celie, I'll no hurt ye,' said Cleg.

Celie drew off her dainty glove, and instantly extended a hand that was white and small beyond all the boy's imagining. Cleg took it reverently in his dirty, work-broadened paw. He touched the slender fingers as if they were made of thistle-down and might blow away accidentally. So he held his breath. Then he took out his knife, one with a point like a needle, which had been used in a shoe factory.

Perhaps Celie winced a little as he opened the blade, but, if it were so, it was very little indeed. Yet it was enough to be perceptible to her very sincere admirer.

Cleg let her hand drop, and without a pause thrust the sharp point into the ball of his own thumb, squeezing therefrom a single drop of blood.

'It's no juist exactly richt, no to hae your ain blood, ye ken!' he explained gravely; 'but as ye dinna tell so mony lees as the boys, maybe mine will do as weel this time to take the oath with.'

With a clean new pen from Celie's desk, Cleg made on her palm the sign of a cross, and for her life the initiated dared not so much as let her hand quiver or her eyelid droop.

She knew that the occasion was an entirely critical one. But in a moment it was over, and Celie Tennant was admitted a *bonâ fide* acting member of the Sooth Back Gang, with full right in its secrets and to the disposal of one full and undivided share of its profits. No questions to be asked as to how these profits were come by. Indeed, from that moment there is little doubt that Celie Tennant might have been indicted for reset, conspiracy, and crimes infinitely various.

That night at Miss Tennant's class there was a full attendance, and the opening was delayed owing to necessity arising for the expulsion of a boy, apparently in no way offending against discipline.

Celie looked the question she dared not speak.

'He's no yin o' us!' explained Cleg in a whisper. 'He belongs to the Potter-raw gang—a low lot.'

Celie felt morally raised by the consciousness of belonging to a gang of the most high-toned 'nickums' in the whole city.

Then Cleg, after the briefest opening exercises had been endured, explained that there remained for that evening only the ceremony of reception of a new member who had already been sworn in. In this Celie had to concur with as good a grace as possible. She was then and there appointed, with acclamation,

a full member of the honourable (or dishonourable, according to the point of view) society of the Knuckle Dusters of the Sooth Back. It was generally felt after this, that Jacob (the Patriarch of that name) could very well afford to wait over for a little.

But, after the ceremony, when Celie looked again at her class, she could hardly believe her eyes. Were these the lads who night after night had stood before her with faces sleeked and smugged with arrant hypocrisy, or had looked up at her after some bout of intolerable mischief, as demure as kittens after spilling a saucer of milk?

A certain seriousness and comradeship pervaded the meeting. But Cleg was not yet at the end of his surprises.

'I perpose,' he said, 'that we hae a Club a' for oorsels.'

The meeting with unanimous palm and hoof signified its approval of this grand proposal, obviously one which had been discussed before.

'We will hae it in here, and we'll pay to be members—an' that will do for the coals, and we'll hae smokin'——'

Celie sat aghast. Events were precipitating themselves with a vengeance. Indeed, surprise sat so manifest on her countenance that Cleg thought it wise to point out its genuine character to his brother members. It would never do for them to believe that the great idea of the club had not originated with themselves.

'*She* kens nocht aboot it, but I ken fine she's gaun to stan' in wi' us!' he explained, putting her, as it were, on her honour and under the solemn seal of the bloody cross of the Knuckle Dusters.

In this Celie, bound by her oath, had indeed no choice.

She must of a surety stand by them. But a serious difficulty occurred to her.

'Lads,' she said, 'we have only the right to this place for one night in the week. How can we occupy it every night?'

All the boys laughed loud. The question was mightily amusing. Indeed, Celie was often most amusing to them when she had no intention of being so.

'Of coorse, we ken, ye hae only to ask *him*!' they said, with one solid voice of general concurrence.

Celie felt herself beginning to burn low down on her neck, and it made her angry to think that in a minute more she would blush like a great baby just out of the senior class of the Ladies' College. The boys watched her maliciously till she looked really distressed, and then Cleg struck gallantly into the breach.

'Chaps,' he cried, 'I think we should ask for oorsels. We

are gaun to elec' a commy-tee and run the show. Dinna let us begin by troublin' Miss Tennant. We'll gang an' ask oorsels. Gin ye are feared, I'm no !'

Crash ! came a stone through the window. All leapt to their feet in a moment.

'It's that dirty scoondrel frae the Potter-raw. Oot after him !' cried Cleg.

Whereupon the newly constituted Knuckle Dusters' Club tumultuously detached itself for police duty. There was a scurry along the highway, a fight at a street corner. Two boys got a black eye apiece. A policeman was assaulted in the half-humorous way peculiar to the district. A letter-deliverer sat down suddenly on the pavement, to the delay of Her Majesty's mails, and after five well-spent and happy minutes, the Club re-entered, wiping its brow, and Cleg cried :

'Three cheers for the Knuckle Dusters' Club ! Miss Celie to be the president for ever an' ever. We'll meet the morn's nicht to elec' the commy-tee. *And there's twenty meenits left for Jacob !*'

And so the Knuckle Duster Club sat patiently down to endure its Scripture lesson.

ADVENTURE XVIII.

BIG SMITH SUBDUES THE KNUCKLE DUSTERS.

THE reader of this random chronicle has not forgotten the Troglodytes—the Cave Dwellers, the Railing Roosters—alien to the race of men, with manners and customs darkly their own.

These are they with whom Cleg had to do, when he amused himself all that summer day opposite the house of the sergeant. Of the Troglodytes the chief were Tam Luke, who for a paltry consideration gave his time during the day to furthering the affairs of Tamson the baker ; Cleaver's boy, who similarly conducted the butcher's business next door ; and the grocer's boy, who answered to the name of 'Marg'—that is, if he who used it was very much bigger and stronger than himself. In other circumstances 'Marg' chased and hammered according to his ability the boy who called the name after him—for it was contracted from 'margarine,' and involved a distinct slur upon his line of business.

But each man of the Troglodytes was a Knuckle Duster. In the Club they were banded together for offence and defence. In

the days before Cleg took in hand to reorganise the club, they had a good many things in common besides the fear of the constable.

Now, each boy was most respectable during his hours of business. There was no 'sneaking' the goods of their own masters. The till was safe, and they did not carry away the stock-in-trade to sell it. But that was pretty much all the way their honour went. Their kind of honesty, it is to be feared, was chiefly of the 'best policy' sort. Fun was fun, and 'sneaking' was the breath of life; but it was one thing to 'fake an apple,' and altogether another to be 'nicked' for stealing from one's master. The latter meant the loss of situation without a character. Now a character is a valuable asset. It is negotiable, and must be taken care of. To steal does not hurt one's character—only to be found out. To break a plate-glass window with a stone does not harm a character as much as it damages the window; but to be an hour late three mornings running is fatal. So Cleaver's boy had a character; 'Marg' had a character, and even Tam Luke had a character. They were all beauties. Our own Cleg had half a dozen different characters—most of them, however, rather indifferent.

But there is no mistake that, under the influence of Celie Tennant and the new Knuckle Dusters' Club, they were all in the way of improvement. The good character of their hours of work already began to lap over into their play-time. But thus it was not always.

Just before its re-inauguration the Sooth Back 'mob' had been rather down on its luck. Cleg was among them only intermittently. They had had a fight with Bob Sowerby's gang, which frequented the Pleasance lands, and had been ignominiously defeated.

Worse than all, they had come across 'Big' Smith, the athletic missionary of the Pleasance. He was so called to distinguish him from 'Little' Smith, a distinguished predecessor of the same name, who was popularly understood to have read every book that was. Big Smith was not distinguished in the same way. All the same, he was both distinguished and popular.

On this occasion he was addressing his weekly meeting underneath one of the great houses. The Knuckle Dusters thought it good sport to ascend to the window of the common stair, and prepare missiles both fluid and solid. This was because they belonged to the Sooth Back, and did not know Big Smith.

Big Smith's mode of exhortation was the prophetic denunciatory. He was no Jeremiah—a Boanerges of the slums rather. He dealt in warm accusations and vigorous personal applications. He was very decidedly no minor prophet, for he had a black beard like an Astrakhan rug, and a voice that could outroar a Gilmerton carter. Also he was six feet high, and when he crossed his arms it was like a long-range marker trying to fold his arms round a target.

'Sinners in Number Seventy-Three!' cried Big Smith, and his voice penetrated into every den and corner of that vast rabbit warren, 'you will not come out to hear me, but I'll make ye hear me yet, if I sraich till the Day of Judgment. Sinners in Number Seventy-Three, ye are a desperate bad lot. I hae kenned ye this ten year—but——'

Clash!—came a pail of dirty water out of the stair window where the Knuckle Dusters, yet completely unregenerate, were concealed.

Big Smith was taking breath for his next overwhelming sentence, but he never got it delivered. For as soon as he realised that the insult was meant for him, Big Smith pushed his hat firmly down on the back of his head, and started up the stair. He had his oak staff in his hand, a stick of fibre and responsibility, as indeed it had need to be.

The first he got his hands upon was Tam Luke.

Tam was standing at the back of a door, squeezing himself against the wall as flat as a skate.

'Come oot!' said Big Smith, in commanding tones.

'It wasna me!' said Tam Luke, who very earnestly wished himself elsewhere.

'Come oot!' said Big Smith, missionary.

Tam Luke came—not wholly by his own will, but because the hand of Big Smith seemed to gather up most of his garments at once. And he grasped them hard too. Tam Luke's toes barely touched the ground.

'It wasna me!' repeated Tam Luke.

'What's a' this, then?' queried Big Smith, shaking him comprehensively, as the coal-man of the locality empties a hundred-weight sack into the bunker. Half a dozen vegetables, more or less gamey in flavour, dropped out of his pockets, and trotted irregularly down the stair.

Then Tam Luke, for the first time in his life, believed in the

power of the church militant. The Knuckle Dusters on the landing above listened with curious qualms, hearing Tam singing out his petitions in a kind of inappeasable rapture. Then, suddenly, they bethought them that it was time they got out of their present invidious position, and they made a rush downstairs.

But Big Smith stood on the steps, still holding Tam Luke, and with a foot like a Sutton's furniture van, he tripped each one impartially as he passed, till quite a little haycock of Knuckle Dusters was formed at an angle of the stair.

Then Big Smith, in a singularly able-bodied way, argued with the heap in general for the good of their souls; and the noise of the oak stick brought out all the neighbours to look on with approbation. They had no sympathy with the Knuckle Dusters whatever. And though they continually troubled the peace of mind of Big Smith with their goings on, yet they were loyal to him in their own way, and rejoiced exceedingly when they saw him 'dressing the droddums' of the youths of the Sooth Back Gang.

'Lay on till them, Maister Smith!—bringin' disgrace on oor stair,' cried a hodman's wife from the top landing, looking over with the brush in her hand. And Maister Smith certainly obeyed her. Each Knuckle Duster crawled hurriedly away as soon as he could disentangle himself. And as each passed the lower landings the wives harassed his retreat with brushes and pokers for bringing shame on the unstained good name of Number Seventy-Three in the Pleasance.

'It'll learn them no to meddle wi' oor missionary,' they said, as they retired to drink tea syrup, which had been stewing on the hearth since morning.

For they felt proud of Big Smith, and told their husbands, actual and attached, of the great doings upon their return at night. It became a standing taunt as far as the Arch of Abbeyhill for a month, 'I'll send Big Smith till ye!' And there was not a Knuckle Duster that did not hang his head at the remembrance. The Pleasance was naturally very proud of its missionary, and offered long odds on him as against any missionary in the town. 'He could lick them a' wi' his hand tied ahint his back,' said the Pleasance in its wholly reasonable pride.

Now this was the cause of the depression which for a long time had rested upon the Knuckle Dusters and tarnished the glory of their name. So low had they sunk that it was more than a month since any of them had been up for assaulting the police.

So that, as you may see, things were indeed coming to a pretty pass. From all this the new Club was to save them.

First of all, it re-established them in their own self-esteem, which is a great point. Then it gained them the respect of others as well, for Miss Tennant was a much honoured person in the Sooth Back. Lastly, the Club fire burned a half a ton of coals in the fortnight, and the fact was fame in itself.

So the Knuckle Dusters squared themselves up, and for the first time since the affair of Big Smith they looked a bobby in the face. More than that, they actually began to show some of their old spirit again.

Specially did they delight to tell the story of the Leith chief of police and the apples. It was, indeed, enough to gild any 'mob' with a permanent halo of glory.

This is the tale at its briefest. But it took four nights to tell in the Club, working three hours a night.

The chief, in the plainest of plain clothes, was hastening down the shore to catch the Aberdour boat, for he was a family man, and also a most douce and home-loving citizen. He had taken a cottage near the shore at Aberdour, where he could have his bairns under his eye upon the beach, and at the same time be able to note how badly the Fife police did their duty in the matter of the Sunday excursionists.

But for all that he ought to have had that packet of apples better tied up, for he had bought a whole shillingworth on his way down. The chief was rather partial to a good apple himself; and, in any case, it is always advisable to be on the safe side of one's wife, even if you are a chief of police.

Now the chief reckoned without the Knuckle Dusters. These valiant youths were on the war-path, and as he was passing a point where the houses are few, along by the dock gates, Tam Luke came alongside and pulled the string of his parcel with a sharp and knowing twitch. Instantly it came undone, and the apples rolled every way upon the street. Thereupon every Knuckle Duster seized as many as he could reach, and the Club scattered like hunted hares down alleys and over fences.

For a moment the chief stood thunderstruck. Then he gave chase, selecting Cleaver's boy for his prey. But he found that he was not quite so supple as when he was a young constable fresh from the country. And besides, he heard the warning whistle blow from the 'Lord Aberdour.' He pictured his bairns on the

quay and his wife looking out for him. After all, was it worth it? So he darted into a shop and bought chocolate instead, and took his anger out by saying, 'I'll wager I'll make it warm for these young vagabonds.' He said it as many as forty times on the way over. He never minded the scenery one single bit. Among the Knuckle Dusters there was great jubilation. That night they told the whole to Celie Tennant, who was horrified; but she could only advise them to 'restore fourfold,' an unknown idea to the Club.

It was, however, a proposition ably advocated by Cleg Kelly, who, owing to absence, not honesty, had taken no part in the larceny. And, strictly as a humorous conception, the idea of fourfold restitution caught on wonderfully.

This is why a very dirty paper containing two shillings came to the chief of the Leith police, with the inscription thereon: 'FOR TO BUY MAIR AIPPLES.'

Celie wanted them to send four shillings, but the Club unanimously declined, because the grocer's boy said that the chief's apples were only second quality.

And the Club had every confidence in the grocer's boy being well-informed on the point.

ADVENTURE XIX.

THE PILGRIMS OF THE PENNY GAFF.

THE junior partner was, as he expressed it, 'down on his luck.' He was heartily sorry for himself, and indeed the fault was not all his own. It was now some considerable time since he began regularly to see home the lady member of the Knuckle Dusters' Club, and perhaps he had begun to some extent to presume upon his standing. He had, in fact, taken it upon him to warn her as to the difficulties of her position.

'It is not right for a young lady to be about in this district at night—no girl ought to do it, whatever be her motive.'

He was sometimes a very short-sighted junior partner.

Celie Tennant fired up.

'And pray, Mr. Iverach, who made you my guardian? I am quite of age to judge where it is right for me to go, and what it is proper for me to do!'

The junior partner assumed a lofty attitude.

'I consider,' he began, 'that it is highly improper.'

But this was as far as he got. The pose judicial was not one to which Miss Cecilia Tennant was accustomed, even from her own father. She dropped her companion a very pretty courtesy.

'I consider that our roads separate here,' she said; 'and I wish you a very good evening, Mr. Iverach!'

And she gave the junior partner a look at once so indignant and so admirably provocative, that he turned away righteously incensed, but at the same time miscalling himself for more kinds of idiot than his father had ever called him, even on his most absent-minded days in the office.

Nevertheless he endeavoured, by a dignified manner as he walked away, to express his wounded feelings, his unquenchable sense of injustice, the rectitude of his aims and intentions, and the completeness with which he washed his hands of all consequences. It is not easy to express all this by simply taking off one's hat, especially when you have a well-grounded belief that you are being laughed at privately by one whom you—well, respect. And saying 'silly girl' over and over does not help the matter either. For the junior partner tried, and it did not improve the situation so much as the value of a last evening's paper.

On the other hand, there was a sense of exhilaration about Celie Tennant's heart and a certain lightness in her head, when she had thus vindicated her independence. She stopped and looked into the window of a shop in which nothing was displayed but a large model of a coal-waggon, loaded with something 'Jewels,' and bearing the sympathetic announcement that Waldie's Best Household Coal was down this week one penny a bag.

It is a curious thing, when you come to think of it, that the prettiest girls often stop opposite dark shop fronts where there is apparently nothing to interest them, and pass by others all aglow with the blanched whiteness of female frilleries. There is some unexplained optical problem here. The matter has been mentioned to Miss Tennant, but she says that she does not know the reason. She adds that it is all nonsense. Perhaps, after Professor Tait has found out all about the flight of the golf-ball, he will give some attention to this question. He can obtain statistics and facts on any well-frequented street by keeping to the shady side.

So Celie stood a moment—only a moment, and was then quite ready to turn away, assured in mind and at peace with all men—with the doubtful exception of Mr. Donald Iverach.

Her bonnet was indeed 'straight on.' But she gave her foot a little stamp when she thought of the junior partner.

'The idea!' she said.

But she did not condescend to expound the concept which troubled her, so that an idea it has ever since remained, and indeed must be left as such.

Then Celie became conscious that some one was gazing at her—not a woman, of course. She turned. It was only Cleg Kelly. But she was glad to see even him, for, after all, one does need some support even in well-doing. It is so difficult to be independent all by one's self.

'Where are you going, Cleg?' she said.

'To the penny shows aff o' the Easter Road,' replied Cleg.

'Will you take me, Cleg?' said Celie, with a sudden clearing of her face, her eyes beginning to blaze with excitement.

A great thought took possession of her. This appeared to be a providential chance to prove all that she had been advancing to Mr. Donald Iverach, who, indeed, had nothing whatever to do with the matter.

'Take you, Miss Celie?' stammered Cleg aghast. 'Ye wadna gang to the shows?'

And he laughed a little laugh of wonderment at the jest of his goddess, for of course it could only be a joke.

'I *will* come with you, Cleg, if you will take me!' said Celie.

'But ye ken, Miss Celie, it's no for the like o' you. It's a' weel mouch for boys and common fowk, but no for you!'

Thus Cleg urged prudence, even against the wild hope which took possession of him.

'Come on, Cleg!' said Celie Tennant, rushing into rebellion at the thought of having her independence called in question, even by one of the Knuckle Dusters.

'It's all *his* fault!' she said to herself.

Which it very clearly was—Cleg's, of course, for he ought not to have followed her home.

Now along the Easter Road, then only a somewhat muddy country track, there was a small quarry which is now filled up, and a vacant acre or two of land where the show-folk took up their stances, and waged mimic but not bloodless wars in the mornings for the best positions.

Great sheets of canvas were stretched above, flaring cressets were being lighted below, for some of the largest shows were dark inside, being those where the mysteries of 'Pepper's Ghost' were shortly to be unveiled.

Celie Tennant was greatly excited by the prospect of eating of the tree of knowledge.

'Let us go in here,' she said, pointing to the wondrous 'Ghost Illusion' bearing the name and style of Biddle. She drew out her purse to pay, but Cleg stopped her with his hand. He had grown quite dignified.

'Na,' he said, 'ye canna do that. It's my treat the nicht, when ye are walkin' oot wi' me.'

Then it dawned upon Celie that she was assisting at a well-understood function—no less than the solemn treating of a lady fair upon the evening of a pay-day. The thought nearly overcame her, but she only said, 'Thank you, Cleg,' and was discreetly silent.

For the time being she was Cleg Kelly's 'young woman.'

They went in. A fat woman, with large silver rings in her ears of the size of crown pieces, took Cleg's money and looked with great sharpness at them both. Cleg paid for the best places in the house. They cost him sixpence, and were carpeted—the seats, not the floor. To such heights of extravagance does woman lead man! The play was already proceeding as they sat down. Presently, after some very moral observations from an old gentleman in trouble with a dying child (he said 'choild'), the curtain dropped and the roof of canvas was drawn aside, in order to let in the struggling day-light and save the flaring naphtha cressets.

Instantly Celie and Cleg became the sole centre of attraction—a doubled courtier in tights, with an unruly sword which scraped the curtain, having no chance whatever by comparison with their grandeur. Cleg folded his arms with a proud disdain and sat up with a back as straight as an arrow.

'Glory be—if 'tisin't Cleg Kelly wid the Quane of Shaeba,' said a compatriot in the pit. (The house was divided into pit and carpet.) And this was the general opinion. It was the proudest moment of Cleg's existence—to date, as he himself said.

Celie sat all the while demure as a kitten and smoothed her gloves. Several Knuckle Dusters passed Cleg the private wink of the society, but none dared intrude on that awful dignity of responsibility. Besides, none of them were 'on the carpet,' and Biddle of the Silver Rings possessed a quick eye and a long arm.

The curtain went up. This time it was a haunted room. A haunted clock ticked irregularly in the corner, and the villain sat alone in his quite remarkable villainy, on a solitary chair in the middle of the room. It was very dark, owing to the murky cast of crime all round. Suddenly the gentleman on the chair shouted

out the details of his 'croime' at the pitch of his voice, as if he had been the town crier. He told how much he regretted having left his victim weltering in his gore, whereupon the aforesaid victim abruptly appeared, 'weltering,' it is true, but rather in a white sheet with the lower part of which his legs appeared to be having a difficulty.

The villain hastened to rise to the occasion. Once more he drew his sword, with which he had been making gallant play all the time. Again he informed the next street of his 'croime.' Then he pulled a pistol out of his belt and solemnly warned the spectre what would happen if he did not clear out and take his winding-sheet with him.

But the spectre appeared to be wholly unimpressed, for he only gibbered more incoherently and fluttered the bed-quilt (as Cleg called it) more wildly. The villain continued to exhort.

'He's an awfu' blatherumskite!' said Cleg, contemptuously. He knew something of real villains. He had a father.

Again the spectre was warned:—

'Your blood be upon your own head!' shouted the villain, and fired the pistol.

The ghost remarked, *Br-r-r-r-r! whoop!*—went up to the ceiling, came down again wrong side up, and then set about gibbering in a manner more freezing than ever. Whereupon the villain seized his crime-rusted sword in both hands and puddled about in the spectre's anatomy, as if it had been a pot, and he was afraid it would boil over. But soon he satisfied himself that this was not the game to play with a spirit so indifferent. And with a wild shriek of despair he cast the sword from him on the floor.

'Ha, baffled! foiled!' he remarked, clasping his hand suddenly to his brow: 'COL-LD FIRE IS USELESS!'

This was summing up the situation with a vengeance, and tickled Celie so much that she laughed joyously—as the audience clapped and cheered with appreciation, and Cleg rose to come out.

'What comes after that?' said Celie, who was quite willing to stay to the end.

'After that the devil got him. We needna wait for that!' said Cleg, simply. He had an exceedingly healthy and orthodox belief in the ultimate fate of ill-doers. But he did not choose that his goddess should witness the details.

(To be continued.)

PATENTS AND MONOPOLIES.

THE term 'patent' by no means always meant in old times what it does now. It was at the best but a loose form of expression—merely a shortening of 'letters-patent.' These were an authority from the Sovereign, confirmed by the Lord Chancellor under the Great Seal, to do certain things which did not necessarily require the consent of Parliament. Titles of nobility, for instance, were granted under letters-patent, the issuing of which formed a jealously-guarded portion of the Royal prerogative. They were also issued, amongst many other purposes, to give individuals the sole right of importing, exporting, making or selling various articles. They were also granted to inventors, much as they now are under an Act of Parliament, for the exclusive right to make and sell the article they had invented or improved, for a term of years. The former of these two kinds went under the name of 'monopoly-patents,' or, more briefly, 'monopolies.' Sometimes they were granted only for one or more of the four kingdoms; in most cases the terms were a matter of private arrangement with the Sovereign. The Tudors and Stuarts did not hesitate to derive large sums from the sale of monopolies and patent rights of all kinds. These rights gradually became most oppressive, many of the commonest articles of consumption being the monopoly of some greedy courtier who shared his ill-gotten gains with the Head of the State. The system began to be most abused under Elizabeth, who in 1571 first met with murmurs from Parliament, provoked by this growing evil. She put off the subject with soft words, promised to be more careful, and for a time she was. Between 1586 and 1597, however, many grants of monopoly-patents had been made to courtiers and others of a kind not only injurious to the public, but illegal. Some of the patentees were unpopular, and their agents in carrying out the trading-rights were often most arbitrary and inconsiderate in their proceedings.

In 1597 the matter was again brought before the Queen, but, the granting of these monopolies being part of the prerogative, Elizabeth would only promise that 'they should all be examined, to abide the trial and true touchstone of the law.' Nevertheless, in 1600 patents were found to have been granted in greater

numbers than ever, and much feeling was excited over, in particular, a patent given to Henry Neville for the export of iron ordnance. These guns were principally made in the Weald of Sussex, and, being in much demand abroad, to export them was considered to be arming our enemies against ourselves. Neville paid the Queen 3,000*l.* a year for his rights. The Commons would undoubtedly have passed a Bill against monopolies had she not stated, with a very bad grace, that she had been unaware of their bad effects. Before another Parliament met Elizabeth had passed away, leaving the ill-defined prerogatives of the Crown on this subject to be settled between her incompetent successor and the increasingly-powerful House of Commons.

It must not, however, be supposed that all the patents of monopoly were of injurious tendency. Those which gave permission to bring in and enjoy the fruits of a new industry were, of course, directly beneficial. There was more mechanical and artistic talent abroad than in England in those days, and it was good policy to encourage anything which tended to raise native skill to the Continental level. On many occasions foreigners had been invited over, at the King's sole cost, to teach us how to make certain things, or to carry on improved processes of mining, ship-building, stained-glass making, and so on.

In 1603 James's first Parliament decreed that persons who felt themselves injured by the granting of patents or monopolies to others should send in written statements of their cases, and that a committee should report upon such cases and advise what had best be done to meet them. It was found upon inquiry that most of the monopolist trading companies (the largest one the world has ever seen, the East India Company, was founded in 1600) were not doing well, but that many private persons had made large fortunes by their grants. The House then decided that these privileges should be divided into lawful and unlawful ones. On the list being submitted to the King by Sir Francis Bacon, he cancelled some patents, left the legality of others to be settled in the courts of law, and clung tenaciously to his royal prerogative in others.

One of the patents on the list had been granted to the Lord Admiral to sell wines—a somewhat undignified occupation for such an officer, but a curious proof how far corruption had spread in the highest ranks of the public service.

At this period, however, James I. did not quite feel his way in

this country. A total stranger to it, he was careful at first to please his new subjects till he found what they would put up with and what they were rather touchy about. Cautiously he began to grant monopolies in all directions, moved thereto by his own avarice and that of the many needy Scotchmen who followed him into the Land of Promise. The patentees, however, had to pay very smartly for their privileges. James's first exploit was a patent given to Lord Sheffield, Sir Thomas Challenor, and John Bouchier, Esq., in 1606, of 'divers absolute, full, free licences touching the sole and only making of allomes (alum) and liquors thereof' in England, Scotland, and Ireland for thirty-one years, they paying him 700*l.* a year. Having made this tolerably satisfactory bargain (the sum named would be equal to nearer 2,000*l.* now), the King discovered that alum was a metal, and that the prerogative gave him a right to all metals. The patentees, who in the meantime had assigned half their interest to some London merchants, with power to 'dig, open, and work all manner of mines and ewers of allomes' wherever they might be found, had to surrender their rights for 10,000*l.* a year. This was to be raised to 12,000*l.* in three years, but was intended to re-imburse them for the buildings and plant they had erected in various places. The next step of the crafty Scot was to grant a long lease to the adventurers of the buildings and plant in question and half the profits they might make for a certain payment in ready money and the sum of 5,000*l.* for the first year, rising to, and remaining at, 11,000*l.* for a fixed period. This half-share was said to bring the King 18,000*l.* a year (perhaps less the above sum); he stopped the importation of foreign alum, and bound the 'adventurers' not to sell under 26*l.* per ton. Of course the unfortunate lieges who had to use alum were the sufferers by this neat little swindle.

In 1612 King James thought it was time to do a little more business on his own account. One Simon Sturtevant was granted a patent for making with 'sea cole, pit cole or earth cole,' instead of with wood fuel and charcoal, 'all kinds of metal workes and materials, as iron, steele, lead, tins, brass, coppers, brasses, and such like, all kinds of metalique concoctions as sand, mettles, ash mettles, and all kinds of burnt earths as tiles, paving-stones, bricks, and such like.' The destruction of forest-timber for fuel in many parts of the country was becoming extremely serious. As timber was quite as necessary for ship-building as for manu-

facturing, anything which promised to preserve the stock of it was earnestly looked for. Sturtevant proposed to make coals into coke, by which the smoke, then considered most unwholesome, if not dangerous to life, was done away with and the carriage diminished. The rise of the Newcastle coal-trade by sea dates from soon after this time, the term sea-coal having especial reference to it. The patent was for thirty-one years; the profits were divided into thirty-three parts, of which Sturtevant was to have fifteen, the King ten, Henry Prince of Wales five, the Duke of York (afterwards Charles I.) two, and Viscount Rochester one. We do not know what the royal traders made out of their bargain, but think it very unlikely that so excellent a man of business as His Majesty lost anything by it.

The use of coal for the smaller branches of metal-working, such as casting small articles of brass, making horse-shoes, &c., had been common for some time where coal existed, but iron was either not known to exist in the coal country, or till Sturtevant's time no one thought it could be smelted with coal. The enormous destruction of trees in Surrey, Kent, and Sussex, where ironstone abounds, was an additional cause for dissatisfaction at the exportation of cannon cast with the charcoal they produced.

Small money having become very scarce, James granted in 1613 letters patent under the Great Seal to Lord Harrington to coin copper farthings. Lead tokens had been used in places, and were rather liked. It was not easy at first to get the copper farthings accepted, but they were found useful before long. Lord Harrington, who was bound to pay to the King all the profit above 25,000*l.*, made a good thing for himself out of it.

A good many comparatively harmless patents were granted for the right of printing and selling certain books, generally for twenty-one years. In some cases these smaller sort of patents seem to have been given to deserving persons in lieu of pensions. Some cannot, we think, have brought much profit to their holders, as, for instance, one granted in 1618 to Samuel Atkinson and John Morgan 'to find out things hidden in monasteries,' and one in 1616 to Innocent Lamyer to take away shoals and ballast from the Thames. The stones and pebbles were used for ships' ballast, but the rest of the material must have been somewhat embarrassing to its finder. One John Gilbert invented a 'water-plough,' a kind of dredger, and patented it. He agreed to give to the

King one-half of the value of all treasure-trove, plate, jewels, &c., he should find.

Some of the patents were impudent frauds on the public. Two persons obtained one in 1620 for the exclusive right of importing lobsters, pretending to have discovered a great supply of them. Instead, they simply bought them out at sea from Dutch fishermen, and sold for threepence that which hitherto had cost but a penny. The good old days of penny lobsters are, we grieve to think, gone never to return.

About this time (1620) the King, well aware of the general dislike to patents of monopoly, referred each proposed grant to certain law officers and members of the Privy Council, to weigh it and decide whether or not it should be granted. The 'referees,' however, were just as corrupt as every one who had to do with patents, and by their approval often induced people to join in utterly worthless projects.

Much of the opposition to patents, as we said before, was aroused by the high-handed way in which they were worked. Edward and Christopher Villiers, brothers of the royal favourite, George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, were partners with the Duke, Sir George Mompesson, and others, in a patent giving them the entire monopoly of the trade in gold and silver thread, then much used in dress. They were found to have issued warrants in the Attorney-General's name for seizing and imprisoning some who attempted to resist the exercise of the monopoly. Sir G. Mompesson had even committed persons to gaol without examination, whilst another partner, named Fowle, had locked up people in his own house for several weeks. They had broken open houses, seized goods, compelled traders to declare on oath what they had sold, and had mixed lead with the gold and silver used for the thread or lace. Much of this, however, was within the strict letter of the patent, and they were sheltered by the highest authorities, who declared that too great powers had been granted, which were intended to be but rarely used. Nevertheless, Mompesson and another were degraded from knighthood, and heavily fined. Buckingham and his brothers escaped punishment, the House having a wholesome awe of the powerful favourite.

A very excellent industry was set afoot at Mortlake in 1622, under a patent granted to Sir Francis Crane. It was for the manufacture of tapestry, both of the ordinary kind and made with

gold thread; for which, no doubt, the patentees last named made poor Sir Francis pay very smartly. Except for a narrow escape of coming to grief through the slow payments of its royal and noble patrons, the factory seems to have been very successful, and was carried on for a good many years. Both James I. and Charles I. had some splendid suites of tapestry made at Mortlake, and specimens of its beautiful productions still exist.

Parliament, or at any rate the House of Commons, was all along opposed both to monopolies and to patents for inventions, but the King found them much too profitable to give up, and in spite of scandal after scandal he continued to grant them to the end of his reign. So little cared he for the opinion of Parliament that whilst it was considering a Bill for abolishing the system entirely, he granted two persons the privilege of selling letters of naturalisation to foreigners.

The House now took to demanding to see the letters-patent under which the various grantees acted. Some were found to be quite out of order, but thirty members, presenting a petition to the King against monopolies, received a fine snubbing for their pains. 'Now I speak to all of you,' said James; 'be not too ready to hunt out grievances where there is no cause. I find most of them to be slight ones, which indeed makes my heart jovial. I confess I might have passed some upon false suggestion and wrong information, but you are not to recall them before they have been examined by the judges. And here I have heard it complained of by those of our counsel learned in the law that you will from time to time, delaying the patentees, still call for patents without just ground and so put the subjects to much charge, and put a scorn upon my patents. I therefore advise you to be careful that you have a good ground before you call for patents, and that you do not defraud the patentees. Therefore this I say to you, hear the patentees' counsel patiently, say not presently it is against the law, for patents are not to be judged unlawful by you. I must first believe myself and my counsel and then you are to give your opinion of the conveniences that ensue thereupon.' This foolish speech, so like those which Charles also used to treat his Parliament to, doubtless bore fruit later on.

At last, in 1624, an Act was passed declaring monopolies to be contrary to law and subject to be tried and determined by it. Four existing grants, however, were saved from the operation of this Act, and four more shortly to be granted. It is needless to

say that these eight were, or were expected to be, the most lucrative to the King of the whole lot. 'Letters-patent and grants of privilege' might be granted for twenty-one years to original inventors, provided they were not injurious to the commonwealth. Under this Act, however, no inventor could claim a patent as a right; the King could grant it if he chose, subject to the above terms, and to such others as he thought fit, the latter of course taking the form of hard cash.

A curious invention, of 'applyenge of certen compounded stuffes and waters,' in the shape of a cement or dressing, whereby the 'mastes, deckes, tackle, sayles, hulles and bodies of shippes and other vessells may be preserved in fight at sea from burnynge or consumynge by wildfyre or gunpowder,' was patented in 1625 by William Beale, goldsmith, of London. This composition could also be applied below the water-line to prevent the attacks of barnacles and worms, 'whereby many shippes of greate value are oftentimes utterly spoyled.' The patentee was authorised to dig for his materials in all commons and waste grounds, and none were to hinder him.

One of the four patents reserved as soon to be granted proved to be for the manufacture of saltpetre—a necessary ingredient of gunpowder. The principal source of it then known was earth impregnated with manurial matter, and most extensive and vexatious powers were given to the patentees and their agents to dig up and take away the floors of stables, dove-cotes, pig-stys, and such places. The agents were to fill up the excavations with 'goode and mellow earth, fitt for the encrease of the myne of salt-peter.' Paving or boarding the floors was not allowed; the 'salt-peterman' might dig wherever he chose; justices were to refuse him help at their peril, and no maker was to sell gunpowder save to the King's powder-maker. As might be supposed, such powers excited great opposition, and the unfortunate 'saltpetèrmen' were sometimes very roughly handled.

In 1625 William Drummond, an ingenious Scotchman, obtained patents for certain warlike weapons of his invention, which, if they really answered to his description of them, were very much in advance of those times. One of them was 'a sort or machine of congregated musquets, by which one or two soldiers were able to oppose a hundred guns.' It was called the 'thundering chariot' or 'fiery waggon.' One seems to see the germ of the Maxim or Gatling gun—or rather, perhaps, of the mitrailleuse—

in this ancient instrument. Another invention of Drummond's recalls the naval quick-firing gun—'a new species of gun of the greater kind, by which, in the same time that they have been able to discharge one ball, they may now discharge three, four, or five, either by sea or land.' In 1632 one Thomas Grent, 'doctor in phisick,' was granted patents for some extraordinary devices, one of which was 'a fishe call, or looking-glass for fishes in the sea, very useful for fishermen to call all kinds of fishes to their nets, seans, or hookes.' Another of Dr. Grent's inventions was more professional in character. It consisted of 'a moveable hydraulike, or chamber weather cale, like a cabinet, which, being placed in any room or by a bed-side, causeth sweet sleep to those that either by hott feavers or otherways cannot take reste, and withal altereth the dry hott ayre into a more moystening and cooling temper, either with musical sounds or without.' This musical ventilator might be revived with advantage, one would think.

So many as five members of Parliament were expelled by the House in 1640, on the ground that they were 'projectors of patents' or held monopolies. Cromwell, or the Parliament which he controlled, put an end finally to the system of monopolies, or grants of the sole right of trading in certain articles, and for this, as for so much else, he deserves the thanks of posterity. The political disturbances of his time were not favourable to inventors who hoped to make money out of their inventions; but with the general revival of business and confidence after the Restoration, patents were more and more applied for.

So early as 1670 a patent was granted for the manufacture of lined plate, the art being introduced from Saxony. Someone, however, obtained an inkling of the process before the new company got to work, and the proprietors lost everything they had spent in acquiring the right to use it.

A patent was given in 1675 to several 'truly loyal and indigent officers' to have the profits of the Royal Oak Lottery and 'all other lotteries whatsoever, invented or to be invented.' The following year what was about the first tolerably efficient fire-engine was invented, and a patent for it was given to Messrs. Wharton & Strode. The engine comprised leather hose, just like the modern ones, but the difficulty of getting enough water was usually so great that inventions in this line were of little practical value. Repeating-clocks, in which the pulling of a string struck the minute, the last quarter of the hour, and the hour, were also

invented in 1676, but the patent was not granted for several years afterwards.

Prince Rupert, having laid aside the sword, became in his latter days a distinguished inventor and held many patents. That for mezzotint engraving will be familiar to most. He also found out an alloy similar to gun-metal, and used for much the same purposes, and a curious machine worked by horses for towing vessels against wind and tide. This last, however, proved to be more ingenious than useful.

From 1666 it had been compulsory to bury the dead in woollen, to encourage the wool manufacture; and in 1678 Widow Amy Potter obtained a patent for the elegant woollen costume she devised for this melancholy purpose. About 1680 the King's apothecary in ordinary made an unpleasant invention, which Mrs. Potter would doubtless have strongly objected to. It was a mode of preserving dead bodies from decay, without cutting or opening them. He offered for 5*l.* to make any corpse endure for many years without change, and actually presented Charles II. with one, 'with which His Majesty was very much satisfied.' A few years later, one William Wilkins, who had brought over many dead bodies buried in Ireland months before, under this patent appropriately started in business at 'the sign of The Coffin, over against York Buildings in the Strand.'

The Hon. Robert Fitzgerald and others obtained a patent in 1682 for a mode of converting sea-water into fresh, a matter of extreme importance for the navy, where the loss of life and health through bad provisions and bad water was very great. Several captains spoke highly of the invention, but it never seems to have come into general use. Apparently the salt was deposited by some chemical agent.

In 1687 James II. granted letters-patent to William Phipps to search for and get the money out of a rich Spanish vessel lost about forty years before on the coast of Cuba. Phipps's first voyage was a failure, but on a second he managed to recover no less than 200,000*l.* worth. Although similar projects had seldom answered expectations, numbers of people were so inflamed by Phipps's good fortune that quite a mania set in for trying to recover sunken treasure in almost every sea. The vessels of the Spanish Armada were a favourite source of explorations, but in nearly every case the explorers lost everything they possessed. The Duke of Leinster had a grant of all wrecks lying between

12° S. and 40° N.; but whether the owners ever had anything to say about it does not appear.

In 1693 an invention enabling people to walk under water was patented. A man walked in the machine under water from off Whitehall Stairs to below Somerset House. Many patents were granted about this time for various solid forms of ink, such as balls, powders, cakes, &c., which could be dissolved, a little at a time as required, in water, beer, or wine.

Street lamps of one or two kinds were invented and set up in London early in William III.'s reign, and were practically the first public lights. They were not at all popular, however, and people used to amuse themselves by firing at them from the windows. Their use might perhaps have rendered unnecessary the 'night engine,' a machine 'which being set in a convenient place of any house, prevents thieves breaking in and surprizing the inhabitants.'

Windmills for grinding corn seem to have been first erected at Horselydown by Evan Jones of Chester in 1696. Wind power had been used before for pumping and draining purposes, but this seems to have been its first application in England to grinding corn.

The seventeenth century ended with a patent granted to Captain Thomas Savery for what was to prove in after years incomparably the greatest invention that has yet been made for the good of the human race. Although the 'engine for raising water by fire' (steam) was for another century used for little save its original purpose of pumping, Savery's patent was the beginning of an invention which has already lasted two hundred years, with ever-increasing public benefit and utility. It has been the parent of many hundreds of other patents all over the world, though it has now probably nearly reached its limit of improvement.

The subject of patents for inventions is inexhaustible; but we must not assume that our reader's patience is equally so.

We are indebted for much of the foregoing to an admirable article on 'The Progress of the Machinery and Manufactures of Great Britain,' in the Quarterly Papers on Engineering, published by Mr. John Weale, 1846.

*KENNETH.**A GOLFING STORY.*

KENNETH was preposterously virtuous, and his devotion to duty literally sickening. He had always been so from the time when we were at school together at the old school near Musselburgh. It was here borne in upon me that it was my obvious duty to counteract, as far as possible, these wholly unnatural traits in his character.

At the age of thirteen, when we first made each other's acquaintance, his face was always clean, which was a direct insult in itself, and his flannels were as spotless as his face. The length of his morning and evening penance on his knees was amazing, nay, positively maddening to others who had neither the wish nor the ingenuity to prolong their devotions to such indecent lengths. It interrupted conversation and playful exchanges of sponges and boots. It was clear that something must be done to prevent him from coming to a bad end. I fought him as often as possible, but it wasn't much fun, because he always took his lickings with a resignation which would have made a saint swear. It took me nearly a whole term to discover an efficient and un-failing remedy.

It came about on this wise.

It was a very hot day in July, and Kenneth and I were lying on the grass after dinner. It was Saturday and a half-holiday. There was nothing to do, and I was racking my brains to find some possible method of irritating him.

He was lying about three yards away from me—asleep. I looked at his face; he was sleeping as placidly as a babe, Virtue stamped on every feature. I had tried to sleep and failed—and it amazed me that he should be able to rest like this after three helpings of beefsteak pie and two whole baskets of strawberries. He certainly was horribly good and had a most amazing digestion.

It was useless to tickle his nose and ears with grass, he would only roll over on his side and grunt, 'Oh, don't be a beast, Beaver,'—they called me Beaver—and go to sleep again.

I began positively to perspire with irritation, when suddenly

the cause of my first fight with him flashed across my brain. It had been at a time when I was too inexperienced myself to accurately gauge its possibilities, and I shook him by the shoulder.

'Kenneth, wake up, you lazy beast—golf!'

'Too hot,' grunted Kenneth.

'No, it isn't: come on.'

'I've broken my putter.'

'Bag your brother's.'

'Only one round, then, and we can get leave uptown and buy some strawberries afterwards.'

Now Kenneth was an erratic golfer, and golf is the one thing in the world which will unearth all the worst in man—or boy, for that matter.

The links were at the school gates, and in ten minutes we were ready at the Stand hole.

Kenneth had not only taken his brother's putter, but also his cleek and niblick.

Musselburgh was then one of the best links in Scotland. It was at the time when old Willie Park was in the zenith of his fame; when old Bob Fergusson was young Bob; and Crawford had no silver in his hair.

The green in those days was not ploughed up by the myriad iron of all the tyros in the county. It was a time when the whins grew almost from the gasworks hole to Mrs. Foreman's. The time when the 'Belt' was played for by old Tom Morris and Willie Park, and giants such as these. It was the time when 'baffy' spoons were in vogue, and the inventor of the 'Bulger' was but little more than an infant. It was the time when one could play a round in comparative safety, when there were rules to the game, and when the rules were kept.

Now they tell me that there are no whins; that the green resembles a newly-ploughed fallow; that the balls fly as thickly as the leaves in the famous shady valley; that fathers—burdened with a too plentiful offspring—send their superfluous children out on to the links on the off chance—which becomes day by day less of a chance and more of a certainty—of their being killed; that there is no Bob Fergusson; that golf has been reduced to the level of cock-fighting, in that no game is played on which some stake, be it a 'fiver' or a 'nip,' does not depend.

Golf was then, as it always must be, the king of all games, but it was more often golf for the sake of golf, and not for pelf.

Kenneth and I played for love—that is to say, for the certainty of the fight to follow.

Golf is a great game, but trying to the temper. Had it been invented two thousand years ago, there would have been no saints. In these degenerate days parsons do well not to play in black coats; nobody takes the slightest notice of a gentleman in a Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers, with a face purple with fury, from whose clenched teeth oaths of Stygian blackness issue, with a fervour which well beseems the energy but not the office of a clergyman. But if the same gentleman, dressed in a long black coat, were to stamp on the head of his putter, snap his light iron across his knee, hurl his 'mashie' at his caddie's head, or perpetrate any of those gentle pleasantries to which the irascible golfer is prone, one's idea of the general fitness of things receives a rude shock. Even if, after heeling his drive into the sea, he were to mention that his club-maker was no better than a puttyheaded owl, one would feel grieved—if he said it in a black coat. On the contrary, the same remark issuing from the same mouth would be regarded as the acme of clemency—if he said it in a Norfolk jacket. 'Manners makyth man;' but one's clothes cover a multitude of sins.

Kenneth was in form, though how he could see was a mystery to me, after the prodigious dinner he had eaten.

He was three up at Foreman's, and we halved the hole across to the sea. Then came 'Pandy.' Dear old Pandy, the receptacle of more bad language than any other spot of its size in the world.

The teeing ground was near up, and Kenneth determined to try and carry the bunker.

'I shall have a shy at it, Beaver,' he said, cheerfully.

'Oh, rather,' I answered in a confident tone, as though driving Pandy were the merest bagatelle. As a matter of fact, I had never 'carried' it up till then, nor did I until two years after.

Kenneth hit a very clean ball and landed, as I knew he would, plump in the middle of the bunker.

'Not a bad shot, Beaver; I thought I was over.'

'Not bad,' I answered, as I 'putted' gently up to within ten yards of the bunker. With my brassey I got over, and then crossed over and sat on the racecourse railings on the other side.

Now the fun was going to begin.

Pandy in those days was the very most detestable bunker on the face of the earth. It was filled with most things. Possibly old boots with 'cuddy' heels had the predominance; rocks, sea-

weed, niblick shafts, broken red tiles (where those tiles came from has always remained a mystery to me), sand, and the wraiths of long-forgotten oaths—dating back to the days when Scotland was a kingdom, and when those feckless Jameses lost their money over the royal game—helped to fill it up and render the egress of the luckless golfer doubtful—that is to say, with his clubs and temper intact.

Kenneth looked at his ball, which was half buried, and said doubtfully, looking up at me:

‘Not such a very bad lie?’

‘No, not at all,’ I answered cheerfully; ‘you only want to keep well behind, and take lots of sand.’

Kenneth took his brother’s niblick, and dropped the rest of his clubs behind him. He then ‘addressed’ his ball and took a furious shot. Now Kenneth’s brother was much taller than he, and consequently his clubs were much too long for Kenneth. Down came the niblick right on the top of the ball and ‘dunted’ it still deeper into the sand.

‘Hang this niblick!’ said Kenneth, and took another shot, with the same result. Nothing to be seen now of the ball but the merest speck of white.

It was here that Kenneth’s devotion to duty came in. He carefully took aim once more, with exactly the same result. There was no ball to be seen now. Still he went on ‘addressing’ the spot where the ball ought to be with the utmost care, and down came the niblick with a dull thud upon the sand. He did this with the same scrupulous care ten times, and human nature finally came to his aid and sent duty flying with a flea in her ear. I noticed that his face got very red, and that there was a vicious look in his eye as he glanced at me. He began to average the position of the ball, and ‘let in’ about a dozen strokes, one after the other, as quickly as he could lift and swing the niblick. He then paused for breath—I said nothing. After about half a minute he tried a little agriculture. He gave a tentative shot about two feet to the right of the ball, then another about two feet to the left, and so on until the kind Old Lady came to his assistance again, and he made the niblick fairly whizz. He then stopped for breath once more.

From the railings I said in a solemn tone:

‘Kenneth, that’s the thirty-seven more.’

I had just time to duck my head to escape certain death. I

shall never forget the grisly whirr of the niblick as it hurtled past my right ear.

The club landed on the turf of the racecourse, and the shaft broke in three places.

Kenneth picked up his other clubs and stalked out of Pandy.

'But the ball, Kenneth,' I ventured to suggest.

'Damn the ball!' said Kenneth very quickly. His face was quite white now.

'The niblick head?' I said.

Kenneth did not answer. He merely looked at me, and I was glad for my part that my niblick was intact.

'Two up and four to play, then,' I said.

Again Kenneth did not answer.

I felt hurt. If I had not brought him out of 'Pandy' he would have lashed on at that ball, or at the sand, until he had burst every blood-vessel in his body, or died of hunger and exhaustion.

It is a terrible thing to be a slave to duty.

The conversation was limited on the return journey. I only made four remarks, and they were these:

'One up, and three to play.' 'All square, and two to play.'

'Dormy one.' 'Two up and the match.'

Kenneth had not spoken till we had putted out at the stand hole, when he ejaculated:

'After tea, in the fourth form.'

So it was to be a fight after all. I was undisguisedly sorry, because I knew he would get a tremendous whacking from his brother for breaking his niblick, and I knew that the agony of soul which would succeed on that solemn 'damn' would be punishment enough for him.

We sat side by side at tea. We did not speak. It was evident he meant business. He contented himself with four hot buttered twopenny scones, one basket of strawberries, and about a quart and a half of milk.

It was in the air that Kenneth and the Beaver were going to have another 'turn up,' and our class-room was full of fourth-form boys when, half an hour before evening school, we squared up to one another.

That was the toughest fight I ever hope to have.

We seemed to have been fighting for centuries, when a sudden hush fell upon the spectators, and they slunk to their seats.

Kenneth and I fought on, until a quiet voice said :

'It is magnificent, but it is not work. McIntosh and Middleton, sit down, please, and write out the Sallust lesson fifty times.'

I always thought Sallust a fool, but since then I have regarded him with positive nausea.

We worried along after that, fighting in the usual friendly manner until we got into the fifth, when the dignity of our position put an end to it.

We went to Oxford together, and there we contented ourselves with absolutely deleting one another, verbally, in the Union. Kenneth's devotion to duty here again came to his destruction. He read himself ill, and secured a third instead of a safe first in history.

He also narrowly escaped brain fever.

Then our ways parted, and we did not meet again for some years.

I was strolling down Princes Street in Edinburgh one morning in April when I saw Kenneth hurrying towards me with a face of distress.

'Hillo, Kenneth, old man ! how are you ?'

'Beaver ! the very man ; for Heaven's sake come down to Musselburgh by the 2.10 this afternoon and make up a foursome. My boss has asked me to get a foursome, and Alexander has just thrown me over.'

'Who are the other two ?'

'There's old McQuharity, my boss, and Farquharson.'

'All right, I'll come,' I answered.

'Thanks, old chap, awfully. Good-bye till then ; I must get back to the office.'

Kenneth was in the office of McQuharity and Auchterlonie, W.S. Auchterlonie was unhappily no more, and Kenneth had told me when he left Oxford that he was going into the office of this firm, and that he hoped to be taken into partnership ; as yet, however, his hopes were unfulfilled.

Mr. McQuharity was an elder of the Kirk, a most upright and devout man, well encased in that narrow-minded Puritanism which is not altogether unknown in Scotland.

He looked with a very favourable eye on Kenneth, who never swore, nor committed any of the million follies of youth, and whose devotion to duty was beyond all praise.

I got down to the Waverley station at two, and saw old McQuharity standing beside the door of a first-class carriage.

I took off my hat to him, and said :

'I believe I am to have the pleasure of playing golf with you this afternoon, sir?'

'Ah, you are McIntosh's friend?'

I said that I certainly had been, and hoped still was, his most intimate friend.

'It's a friendship you should be proud of, young man. McIntosh is the steadiest and most hard-working young man in Edinburgh. I may tell you that I am going to take him into partnership next Monday. It is my birthday, and I could not give myself a better birthday present. You need not mention the matter, as I want to surprise him.'

At this moment Kenneth came rushing up with a very red face, and said :

'Has Farquharson come?'

'I haven't seen him, McIntosh,' answered McQuharity.

'I'm rather afraid I asked him for to-morrow,' said Kenneth, looking with an expression of shame at McQuharity.

'Never mind, McIntosh, you can play against your friend and me.'

Kenneth brightened up, and said :

'All right, if you don't mind, sir.'

It was a glorious afternoon, and we were in excellent terms with ourselves. McQuharity was one of those 'pawky' old golfers, who never do anything brilliant, but who don't often make a mistake. 'Fiery,' his caddie, knew his play to a nicety, and offered him always, without being asked, the club he wanted.

McQuharity always took the club without a murmur, knowing that 'Fiery' knew better than he himself what he was and what he was not capable of.

All went well till we got to Pandy in the second round. As he had done fifteen years before, and for that matter as he does to this day for all I know to the contrary, Kenneth drove into Pandy. The devil must have had an off day and have come down to Musselburgh to see what was going on; anyhow, he or somebody else suggested to me to go and sit on the railings on the other side of the bunker, which I did.

Kenneth began ploughing. After about half a dozen strokes, I said :

'Kenneth, that's the thirty-seven more.'

' — — — — — ' said Kenneth, and the niblick took off my deerstalker cap on its voyage past my head. It then landed on the racecourse, and the shaft broke in three different places. McQuharitty, who was on the other side of the bunker, dropped his cleek in amazement, and stood gazing at Kenneth with his mouth open.

Over the face of 'Fiery' stole a slow smile of delicious appreciation of the situation; that burly caddie Crawford, who was carrying for Kenneth, at first showed signs of bursting into a roar of laughter. He restrained himself, however, and said:

'Stiddy, noo, stiddy, Mr. McIntosh;' and then, turning to Fiery, he whispered hoarsely behind his hand: 'Dod, Fiery mon, did ye iver hear the likes o' yon? It was fair awfu'.'

There was no more conversation during that golf match. When we were walking up to the station nobody spoke. In the train nobody spoke. At Waverley, Kenneth offered his hand to McQuharitty, who merely bowed. He did not even look at me. When Kenneth had gone, McQuharitty turned to me and said:

'I told you this morning, sir, that I should make Mr. McIntosh my partner. I may now say that Mr. McIntosh is the last person whom I should think of taking into partnership. I never was so shocked in my life. Good-night, sir, good-night.'

Here was a pretty 'how-d'ye-do;' all my fault, too, as usual. I began to wish that there was no such thing as an Established Kirk, and that certain words had never been introduced into the English language. I wished Musselburgh in general and Pandie in particular had never been discovered. I cursed the man who invented golf. One thing was certain: I had got Kenneth into a very bad mess, and I must get him out of it again. I wished to goodness he had not always been so annoyingly good, and then McQuharitty could not have taken so much notice. It was the sudden and total shattering of his idol which had affected him so deeply.

I set to work to find out if any of my friends were intimate with McQuharitty.

I discovered that Addison, a rising young W.S., knew him very intimately, and I made him sit down there and then and invite him to dinner at his club on Saturday.

The time which elapsed between the despatch and the acceptance of the invitation was one of the most exciting and disturbing that I ever remember passing.

The invitation was accepted and I was happy. Kenneth was the other guest.

A shade of anger passed over McQuharity's face when Kenneth appeared, and he saw that he was going to dine in his company. The Elder was very much in evidence for quite two minutes, until we moved off into the dining-room.

I was sorry for Addison, but I told him it must be done, and he was in very good practice considering he was a young man. I shan't forget that dinner, nor do I think will McQuharity and Kenneth, and I am quite certain that Addison's purse felt the effects of it for a considerable time.

McQuharity, like some other Elders, took most of his religion in church; he had none to spare at the dinner-table. There are worse things than Duc de Montebello of '84 and Château La Rose of '64. By half-past eleven, over his third whisky and potash, I felt that McQuharity was ready for my proposition.

He had not spoken to Kenneth during the whole evening, and for the last hour had apparently completely forgotten his presence.

McQuharity's face wore a silly smile as he vainly tried to hum 'A wee drappie o't.' We were in the library, alone.

I took up the air and sang the first two verses, and McQuharity's smile broadened into an inane grin as he beat time with his half-empty tumbler. He was ripe for anything.

'Monday is your birthday, Mr. McQuharity. Let us all go down to Luffness and have a day there. The links are in grand order,' I said.

'Yesh, lesh all go down to Luffnesh,' he murmured.

'All right, that's settled,' I said, as calmly as I could.

Kenneth was safe now.

A few minutes afterwards McQuharity rose to go. I had previously motioned to Kenneth to leave the room.

We saw McQuharity into a cab.

'Mons'ous fine dinner, Ad'son. Till Monday.'

'313 Moray Place,' I cried to the cabby, who looked me over with contempt and said:

'As if I didna ken Airchie McQuharity.'

Kenneth came down the steps of the club, and said:

'Beaver, what on earth are you up to now? He'll never play with me.'

'Oh yes, he will. He forgot you were there to-night, and when he remembers with his soda-water at nine to-morrow morn-

ing, he won't dare to back out for fear we should think he was "buffy" to-night.'

By the first train on the following (Sunday) morning I went down to Musselburgh and saw 'Fiery.' He was obdurate at first, saying :

'I daurna', sir, I daurna'. He'll niver take me agen, and gin he tells the ithers, I'm a waster.'

'He'll never know, Fiery. He just takes what you give him.'

After the transference of some yellow coins from my pocket into Fiery's hands, he at last consented.

'You are sure there are plenty of them, Fiery?' I said at parting.

'Aye, there's a wheen he has na' tiched for twinty year.'

'See that you make absolutely certain.'

'Nae fears o' me, sir—I'll get Wullie to pit a bit varnish ower the heids. Trust me for the shafts.'

On the following Monday morning we met at the 'Waverley.' Addison did not turn up, at which I alone was not surprised.

'Gone on by the first train,' said McQuharity to me.

He simply ignored poor Kenneth, who wore a look of utter bewilderment.

At Inveresk I looked out and saw Fiery get into the train, and I noticed, with delight, that he was carrying a small army of clubs.

I could scarcely restrain a smile of pleasure as I drew my head in again.

When we got to Aberlady and McQuharity found that Addison was not there, he said :

'How shall we play? You and I together?' addressing me.

'Suppose you play against me and McIntosh, Mr. McQuharity, that will make a good game.'

'Very well, it's all the same to me.'

To Kenneth I said on the way to the links :

'He is to win the first round, remember, and let him get two or three up on the second.'

'But what is it all about, Beaver?'

'Wait.'

To Fiery I whispered :

'Are you quite sure you understand, Fiery?'

'Certain,' said Fiery with a grin.

McQuharity won the first round, and was in a good humour when we went in to luncheon in the tiny club house.

He would not speak to Kenneth, however. The remembrance of how with heavy eyes and aching head he had stood beside the plate in church, only twenty-four hours ago, was still very vivid. The Established Kirk was in great force in him to-day.

After luncheon we played as before, and McQuharity was 'one up' at the turn.

I looked at Fiery, whose face bore a stolid, indifferent expression.

We turned, and McQuharity won the first hole home.

'Two up and eight to play,' muttered Fiery, and teed his master's ball.

A half. 'Two up and seven to play,' said Fiery.

I looked at him; still the same expression of stolid indifference on his face.

We halved the next, and McQuharity won the following hole.

'Three up and five to play,' said Fiery, and I wondered if he was going to play me false. If he did I would brain him with my niblick.

We halved the hole.

'Three up and four to play,' said Fiery.

I got behind him and jogged him in the ribs with my 'mashie.'

'Do you understand, Fiery?' I whispered hoarsely.

He did not answer, but looked at me with a pained expression and handed McQuharity a driver.

Whizz! went the head away to the left—and I breathed again.

'Loosened the head,' said McQuharity, and walked on.

'I hae twa mair by me,' said Fiery.

Fiery let him off with his next shot, but gave him an iron with which to approach the hole, that anyone but McQuharity must have seen was a 'deader.'

He swung the club, and as the head touched the turf the shaft smashed in half.

'I haven't done that for twenty years,' said McQuharity shortly.

'Two up and three to play,' said Fiery.

He gave his master his usual driver this time, but handed him a brassey for his next stroke, the head of which snapped in half on touching the ball.

McQuharity said nothing, but one could see that he was displeased. Fiery muttered something about 'the clubs havin' gae a bit dry,' and the game proceeded. Fiery managed it to perfe

tion, and as we came on to the putting green of the last hole his pockets were quite full of stray driver, brassey, and iron heads, while McQuharity's face had got redder and redder.

We were all even and one to play, and McQuharity was going to play the 'odd' on the green.

Fiery handed him a putter, and glanced at me.

It was a longish putt, requiring a sharp stroke, and as the putter head touched the ball, the head slewed slowly round and looked as silly as might be. The ball went away off the line to the right.

It was then that the pent-up bad language of thirty years found egress. McQuharity's face got very white, and he let most men and most things have a turn. It lasted for full two minutes, and I could not help remarking that in his youth his vocabulary must have been extensive. There never was a man so miscalled as the unfortunate Fiery, and he consigned poor Forgan, who always made his clubs, to every possible kind of perdition. He snapped the putter shaft into tiny pieces and hurled the head at an unoffending cur who had come to see what all the noise was about, and, with a 'Burn every one of those — clubs' to Fiery, he stalked off over the wooden bridge to the main road.

Golf is a great game—but trying to the temper.

Kenneth could not quite understand it yet, but I told him I could not explain just now.

After allowing McQuharity about three quarters of an hour to 'consider himself,' we strolled up into Aberlady.

'Maister McQuharity's upstairs,' said Clark, as we went into the golf hotel.

McQuharity came to meet us on the landing; he wasn't looking very happy, but he smiled as he went up to Kenneth, and offering him his hand, said:

'The best of us are but human, McIntosh;' and then, turning to me, he said:

'Let me introduce you, sir, to the junior partner in McQuharity, Auchterlonie, & McIntosh.'

Kenneth took my arm on our way downstairs, and whispered in my ear:

'You are a good soul, Beaver, but I'll be hanged if I ever play golf with you again.'

ABOUT AMBER.

AMBER is only fossilised pine-resin.

So much everybody knows. But beyond that simple statement of geological fact, most people's ideas, I fancy, grow somewhat vague and conveniently hazy. They believe that amber was produced and hardened at that popular but rather indefinite period which is generally veiled in decent obscurity by saying 'in those days,' and then having done with it. 'Once upon a time' is the universal date in most people's geology. They picture the amber as trickling ready-made from strange, weird forests of palms and tree-ferns and gigantic horsetails, somewhere about the time when the coal measures were deposited; and they stock the wild woods they have thus dimly imagined with a grotesque collection of sea-saurians from the Lias and mammoths from the Pleistocene, flying pterodactyls from the early Oolite, and colossal deinotheria from the Paris Eocene. In short, they run together all geological time into a single tableau with charming impartiality, blandly believing creatures to be contemporary with one another which were really divided by epochs of time compared with which the distance from the Pyramid of Cheops to the Albert Memorial isn't worth taking into consideration.

Let me make for one second a historical parallel. How delightful it must have been to live in the days when Rameses II. went hunting the Greenland whale with Queen Elizabeth and Cleopatra in the leafy woods of Babylon; while Antony, mounted on his favourite dromedary, urged on the chase of the buffalo over the boundless prairies, and Alfred the Great, eager to make every child in China read the precepts of Confucius, stood surrounded by his flamens on the banks of the Euphrates, welcoming Montezuma to the opening feast at the dedication of his friend Solomon's temple! That is but a faint and feeble parody of the sort of hash ordinary mortals make of geological history, under the combined influence of popular lectures and the extinct monsters at the Crystal Palace.

Now let us see whether in this particular matter of amber we can set things straight a little—whether we can turn Charles II.

out of Semiramis's boudoir and discriminate accurately between the Age of Pericles and the Age of Reason.

Viewed by a geological as opposed to a historical standard, amber is by no means a very ancient product. It is but a thing of yesterday. At the time when it was laid down, or exuded fresh from its parent trees, the coal measures were practically as old as they are to-day. The saurians of the Lias, the winged dragons of the Oolite, were as unknown and as antiquated in that world as they are this morning in the English Channel. A pterodactyl would have excited every bit as much surprise on the banks of the Baltic in the amber age as he would excite this week on the flags of Piccadilly. The generation of crawling monsters and stiff-jointed trees had passed utterly away; and Europe was overgrown by a semi-tropical forest of quite recent aspect, far less strange and antique in fauna and flora than the Australian woodlands of the present day. In short, to the eyes of a casual observer it would have appeared that the modern period had fully set in. A Cook's tourist personally conducted from the nineteenth century into the midst of the world where amber had its birth would not notice the difference between the beasts and birds and trees around him and those which he found on previous trips in Algeria or India.

I am speaking, of course, of a general view by an unbiological observer. It is not likely he would be lucky enough to hit just at once upon an anoplotherium or a hyopotamus, which would certainly strike him as an anachronism in Regent's Park; and though the presence of a rhinoceros or a tapir might cause him just alarm, still, from the point of view of natural history, these, after all, are common objects of the Zoo—unpleasant, perhaps, when unaccompanied by their keepers, but in no wise remarkable as antique animals. Our tourist, in short, would find himself in the midst of deep green pine woods which would recall to his memory those of Southern California, while he would find them peopled by flamingoes, ibises, pelicans, and parrots which would remind him strongly of the African lakes in our own century. The general aspect of Nature would be much as we know it in the present generation.

Again, let us be more definite. Let us fix our date as nearly as we can—not to a year, indeed, or for the matter of that to a millenium, but at any rate to an epoch. That is about as much as we can do in geology. All amber is not quite of the same age; but by

far the greater part of it is derived from certain beds in Samland, on the Baltic, of the Oligocene period. Now the Oligocene, as its name imports, succeeds the Eocene, and precedes the Miocene; that is to say, it forms, as it were, the middle chapter in the history of the Tertiary or distinctively modern geological æon. If I were to venture once more on a historical parallel, I would say the primary period might be compared to the eleven centuries of English history between the landing of Cæsar and the landing of William the Conqueror; the secondary period might be compared to the five centuries between William and Elizabeth; while the Tertiary period might be compared to the three centuries between Elizabeth and the present moment. Judged by such a standard, the Oligocene, or amber age, would answer roughly to the eighteenth century.

During the Oligocene time, then, the Baltic basin and the whole of North Germany was covered by a dense forest of pines and other conifers, growing on beds of sand, in the deltaic mud of some mighty river. Many of these trees fell and rotted where they stood; and from the bits of their wood still left and from the impressions of their leaves stamped on the mud beside them (now hardened into shale) we are able to form a very clear idea of the composition of this pre-historic forest. It was semi-tropical or tropical in character, and consisted for the most part of trees extremely like our modern yews, cypresses, and firs, as well as of the giant pines of California. Conspicuous among them were the pretty salisburias, with leaves like maidenhair, now planted so abundantly on the outskirts of Florence. But interspersed with these conifers were various forms of laurel, fig, and oak, the maple and the walnut, and still more southern types like palms and cinnamon. These are the trees of India and Australia to the present day, very slightly modified in adaptation to modern needs, but still essentially the same as on the Oligocene Baltic.

The trunks and branches that fell and rotted in this ancient forest now form beds of lignite or coarse and woody coal; when black and earthy it is used for burning, but some of it, which is yellow, is employed for the manufacture of paraffin. In other words, the Pomeranian peasant kindles his fire with sticks which grew a million years ago, on a moderate computation, and lightens his darkness with the oil of trees which died and fell before humanity was dreamt of.

The animals of the amber period, and of the Oligocene

generally, were not very different from the tropical animals of our own dispensation. ('Dispensation' is a very good word, and I don't see why it should be abandoned without a struggle to the ecclesiastical authorities.) Many familiar genera had already developed, even among mammals; such are the moles, the muskrats, the shrews, the tapirs, the rhinoceroses, the civets, and perhaps the dogs. As for the birds, they were birds of a feather quite of the modern sort; while the lizards and small fry would hardly be noticed by any one on earth save an abandoned beetle-hunter. But, on the other hand, many well-known groups very useful to man were still in their infancy. The horses had only begun to exist in small ancestral types, with 'points' which nobody in Newmarket would recognise as equine; deer and cattle were unknown; and if any progenitor of the human race yet existed, it was merely in the form of some anthropoid ape, just capable of wielding a dubious club and of fashioning flint into the rudest and coarsest of hand implements. Even to admit this last possibility, indeed, is scientific heresy, for which the Royal Society would doubtless burn me; and I hasten to add that the evidence on which it rests is worse than shadowy. As a whole, the Oligocene was an age of pachyderms, predecessors of the mammoth, the mastodon, and the elephant. It was destitute of the horned ruminants, and of the larger carnivores, which now form the dominant groups in most grassy and forest-clad regions.

Such, in general aspect, was the world where amber originated. The precious gum itself flowed as resin from the pines which towered among the woodlands of the lignite beds, and especially from one tree which is scientifically known as the amber-fir. Oozing from the trees as they grew, or from injured boughs and fallen trunks, it got embedded in the ground at their feet, in a layer of greenish sand, some six feet thick, which formed the original base of the lignite forest. Hence, at the present day, it is found in lumps in this bed of sand, at or below sea level, while above it lie the layers of lignite and lignite-bearing sandstone, with yew wood and cinnamon leaves, which represent the remains of the ancient woodland.

As the turpentine oozed out, it frequently happened that flies, centipedes, and other creeping creatures got clogged and stogged in it, as is often the case to this day in our own pine-woods. The remains of these insects form the 'flies in amber' about which so much has been said and written. I am sure the long-suffering

reader will admire the self-control with which I refrain from inflicting upon him the most wearisome of stock quotations. As a rule, the insects have struggled hard for life, after getting stuck in the resin, as one can see by their torn wings and the contortions of their members; so that we get, as it were, the whole history of a prehistoric Pompeii on a small scale reproduced before our eyes after the lapse of a thousand ages. We are spectators, so to speak, of a prehuman tragedy. But sometimes the resin poured out so fast that the animal was enshrined in it almost before he knew it; and then we get the most delicate wings embalmed intact, with all their veins and branches, in the transparent material. Canada balsam, a very similar gum, is now used by microscopists for a similar purpose.

Insects undergo modification much more slowly than the higher animals, so that most of the 'flies in amber,' as well as the scorpions and spiders, belong to types still represented among us. Some of them, however, differ from existing kinds, while a few are interesting from the point of view of evolution, because they display intermediate or parental forms, half way between two or more existing species. For instance, in Northern Europe now we have two related ants, one of which is small and yellowish brown, while the other is decidedly larger and blacker. In the amber we get neither of these two types, but a common ancestor, just half way between them, bigger and blacker than the one, smaller and yellower than the other. And the transparency and perfect preserving power of the amber makes it an admirable means of observing the nature of Oligocene insects. Crustaceans and leaves have also been found enclosed in this natural framework.

After the forests of conifers which produced the amber had ceased to flourish, various events happened in Germany and Northern Europe before the age of Bismarck. From the beginning of the Miocene epoch onward, the climate of the northern hemisphere began to grow constantly colder and colder. Trees of more arctic types replaced by degrees the conifers, the cinnamons, and the palms of the Baltic. Slowly hard times came on, the elephants took to woolly coats and grew into mammoths. Ice and snow invaded the area of the sub-tropical forests—the glacial epoch had set in. For thousands and thousands of years, Glasgow and Berlin, Aberdeen and Hanover were covered by one huge pervading ice-sheet like the one which Dr. Nansen has crossed in our own time in the interior of Greenland. That was the beginning

of the modern world. The glacial epoch started things as we know them. We are not quite out of it yet. We still shiver from the effects of it.

What happened to the amber and the bed of sand in which it was buried during all that long time we can only guess at. But at any rate the gum grew hard and close, no doubt from pressure. When things came right again, and the new lord of creation, Man, began to roam once more on the shores of the Baltic, the resin of the ancient pine-woods had become strong and mineral-like, though still retaining in all essential features its vegetable properties. You can melt it if you make things hot enough—a gentle heat about three times as great as is required to boil the domestic kettle suffices for the purpose—and you can burn it if you choose, of course at your own peril. (Small boys are requested not to verify this statement on their mothers' necklaces.) When lighted, it gives out a bright flame, like most other resins, and exhales a pleasant aromatic odour. You can also deprive it, by means of ether, of all its soluble constituents, in which case its composition is found to be the same (chemically speaking) as that of camphor, which is also a vegetable exudation. In short, it is only so far fossilised as to be harder and more close-grained than most vegetable gums; in all essential respects, it still remains true to the resinous state of its childhood.

Though the largest deposits of amber occur on the Baltic, lumps are also found all over the region covered by similar forests at about the same period, as, for example, on the east coast of England, in Sicily and the Adriatic, in Siberia, Greenland, the United States, and Australia. But by far the greater part of all the amber known comes from the Baltic coast, between Königsberg and Memel; and I will say a few words by-and-by on the mode of its extraction there in this enlightened age. Meanwhile, I will touch lightly on its historical use for human adornment.

It is probable that savage man first noticed amber when torn by storms from its native bed in the sands by the sea-shore, and flung up on the beach with the pebbles and seaweed. Perhaps the most likely thing to attract his attention to it in very early times would be its singular lightness; for a good-sized lump weighs ever so much less than almost any other stone of the same size, except perhaps pumice. If, having satisfied his curiosity at a first glance, he flung it down and broke it, he would be equally struck by its clear yellow colour, like barley-sugar; not, of course,

that barley-sugar would be familiar to the primeval savage who first used amber. Moreover, he couldn't fail to observe the curious shell-like patterns with which it breaks—what science describes as its 'conchoidal fracture.' At any rate, primitive man soon learnt to smooth and polish the lumps for the decoration of his own person; and that primitive woman followed close in his steps is, to say the least, a very probable inference. Already in the interments of the Stone Age we find amber ornaments laid in the grave with the dead in many parts of Europe. Indeed, owing to its clear pale yellow colour, amber is peculiarly becoming to all dark-skinned races, and even at the present day a large part of the output of the Prussian beds finds its way ultimately to Central Africa and to the South Sea Islands. By the date of the Bronze Age the use of the pretty yellow resin 'in the arts,' as then understood, had become extremely common. Homeric chiefs rejoiced in amber decorations; a carved cup of amber has been found in a tumulus at Hove, near Brighton; while amber hilts or pommels, sometimes daintily inlaid with pins of gold, have been taken from barrows at Hammeldon Down in Devonshire, at Winterbourne in Wilts, and in many other places. Finds of this sort are frequent all over the Continent. At Hallstatt, our Bronze Age ancestors used pieces of amber for inlaying the handles and scabbards of swords; while, as to amber beads, amber buttons or studs, and amber ornaments generally, they occur too often in cemeteries of that time to call for separate mention.

Has it ever struck you as a curious fact that all early commerce was based, not on the interchange of useful products, but on the barbaric love for gewgaws and feathers, for gold and precious stones, for ivory, amber, jade, lapis lazuli, and Tyrian purple? Decoration is dearer to the soul of man than corn or sugar. It seems probable that from a very early period a trade in amber existed between the Baltic and the south and east of Europe; indeed, the direction of this trade has been traced in part by German professors. No doubt it was carried on in much the same simple way as the Arab trade with unexplored Central Africa, or as the frontier barter between uncivilised races. For ages man trafficked in gold and gems, in pearls and feathers, before commerce sprung up in grain and food-stuffs, in wool and cotton, in tea and coffee.

Furthermore, since amber is an ancient object, found in tombs and barrows, it shares with flint arrowheads and most such early

precious possessions in the common property of being an excellent amulet against disease and witchcraft. For this purpose a great demand exists in the East for amber; and quantities are used up every year at Mecca, in Mohammedan rites, to preserve the sacred shrines of that holiest of cities from the assaults of the evil one. It is probable that many of the amber ornaments buried with the dead were regarded as amulets. Indeed, whatever is valuable has mystic healing properties in various directions. Jade is holy and worshipful on its own account, and gold is a sovereign remedy in several diseases. The use of amber as a medicine had, no doubt, the same origin; but modern practice has not encouraged a scientific belief in its medicinal properties. It has dropped out of the Pharmacopœia, in common with many other antique remedies. Yet a volatile oil is still distilled from it which is said to be a specific for convulsions in children. Perhaps the convulsions are due to the acts of demons, and the magical power of the amber expels them promptly. Even so, the piece of gold hung round the patient's neck in the touching-cure for king's evil in itself contributed to the success of the operation. The whole treatment was magical. Our ancestors naïvely argued that so valuable a thing as gold or jade must surely be good for the gout or the rheumatics.

At the present day the supply of amber is chiefly obtained from the dreary and desolate region of Samland, on the eastern Baltic, a strange weird land of blowing sand, shifting sand-dunes, and poverty-stricken amber-hunters. It is a cold northern Sahara. The district produces absolutely nothing but amber; vegetation it has none, and from Königsberg, its capital, to the end of the promontory scarcely anything subsists that a man could live upon. Its trade is all retrospective and geological. It lives upon the memory of its Oligocene fertility. Most of the amber is obtained after stormy weather by men who wade in the water with long hooks in their hands, and secure the lumps, torn up from the submarine beds, among the floating seaweed. But a considerable portion is also got by diving. For the beds are almost all below sea-level, and it is only after heavy storms that the precious resin is dislodged in any quantities. No wonder it seemed to earlier ages a gift from the gods, very mystic and magical. Königsberg and Memel are the centres of the export traffic. The biggest lumps go direct to Constantinople, Mecca, and North Africa, partly to be used up in Mohammedan cere-

monies and partly to be carved into cigarette-holders, pipe-stems, and personal ornaments. The smaller pieces are sent to Italy, where they are manufactured into beads and other gewgaws for the annoyance of tourists; while much is exported to uncivilised countries for the further adornment of those dusky ladies so dear to the hearts of our Stevensons and our Haggards. The lumps vary immensely in size; there is one in the Berlin Museum which weighs fifteen pounds. At first sight, the ingenuous observer is apt to think no pine trees of our days produce such masses of resin. But then he should remember he is comparing a few hundred years of our cleared and stunted Europe with heaven knows how many ages of unbroken forest, and heaven knows what big groves of gigantic pine trees.

Many other economic uses have at various times been made of amber. It is good for broken hearts and blighted affections. It also yields an oil which is the basis of *eau de luce*, a famous old perfume; and by mixing *eau de luce* with nitric acid artificial musk is cunningly manufactured. Amber varnish, again, is a celebrated preservative; and it is said that Stradivari's and other Cremona violins owe to its use their fine tone and their long power of endurance. Of late years this varnish has once more been produced in considerable quantities for commercial purposes; but whether our violins will equal a Strad. when they have been kept long enough is a question on which it would be premature to express an opinion for the next half century. I need hardly add that the science of electricity owes its very origin to the working of amber, in the course of shaping and polishing which a large amount of electric energy is generated. But is it not curious to think that the power which is now just on the point of revolutionising the world should thus have become known to us first of all through the act of preparing barbaric gewgaws? In everything civilisation is based upon savagery. Our commerce is barter for two shining metals; our chemistry is an outcome of alchemy and magic.

Of course, an article of such commercial importance as amber is sure in this age of enterprise to be counterfeited, and imitation amber is extremely common. It is made of copal, camphor, and turpentine, but it can be detected by its lower melting-point and by the ease with which it softens in cold ether. Insects, leaves, and other curiosities are often enclosed in this mixture, and the same with intent to deceive, being sold to collectors as genuine

'flies in amber.' I have even had a beautiful specimen offered me which contained a whole lizard. Natural amber, when rubbed, gives off a faintly pleasant odour, but this is altogether lacking in the artificial imitation.

There is something strange and weird, when one comes to think of it, in the familiarity and commonness of so ancient a resin, the indurated gum of mighty forest trees that flourished and fell ages before man had set foot upon this planet. How little we think, when we put the mouthpiece of the matutinal pipe to our lips, that the amber which forms it exuded drop by drop a million years back from the stems of great pines in a world whose very shores and seas are now forgotten! The plants which composed those vast woodlands where the Baltic now stretches have been driven southward long since by the slow coming-on of that secular chill in the world's dotage which we call the glacial epoch. Of the pine which chiefly yielded amber not a single specimen now survives on our earth; and even the great Wellingtonias, which towered over the rest, have dwindled away in our own time to two solitary and dying groves in the uplands of California. The trunks themselves are gone or reduced to lignite, but the gum that flowed from them in such strange abundance is still a common object of commerce the whole world over, and familiar in our mouths as the pipe it holds there. Nay, more; it has supplied our language with a whole group of words—'electric,' and 'electricity,' and 'electrotype,' and so forth—and in all probability it has given us the sole clue without which we might never have possessed the telegraph and the telephone, or the unknown wonders of the next generation.

THEIR JOURNEY'S END.

THINGS were out of joint in and about Twybridge station towards sunset on a mid-August evening. In a steep grain-field a short way down the line a locomotive lay, where a locomotive clearly had no business to be, among rustling wheat-ears and nodding poppy-heads, through which it had ploughed a deep and dusty track before it had toppled over, a rather impressive spectacle of force broken loose and baffled. Fading vapours of steam and smoke still hovered round it, but for the present it was left deserted upon the clods, while at a few yards' distance a gang of professional railway-men were silently removing 'the block' amid much shouting and a little assistance from excited amateurs. It was not a very bad accident after all, though everybody agreed that there had been the makings of a first-rate disaster, only prevented by an unusual paucity of passengers and the opportune breakage of a coupling-iron. As it was, personal injuries were neither many nor serious, and but one traveller had departed to the Bourn. He, however, was undoubtedly a person of consequence, as could be learned from a glance at his luggage; and he had been, moreover, killed in a picturesque and melodramatic manner, since the flying open of a carriage-door, at the moment when his head was out of its window to see what was up, had flung him down among the wheels, with a sequel of ghastly entangling, dragging, and crushing, upon which none save a special correspondent or a tragic Greek *Ἀγγελος* should presume to dilate.

Up at the little station itself a springtide of flurry and fuss was slowly subsiding, but still stood above high-water mark in the distracted countenance of the short stout station-master. The first-class waiting-room was filled with an unassorted group of passengers, there bestowed until the broken thread of their journey could be mended. They were all more or less shaken in body and mind, and as a rule loquaciously disposed, treating the same theme with variations ranging from the tirade which its wrathful declaimer would next morning shape into a newspaper-letter to the suaver utterances of a plump middle-aged dame, whose con-

gratulatory remarks about Providence were rejoined to with snappish logic by an aggrieved bagman, while her subdued-looking husband, who had sustained a somewhat excruciating contusion of the elbow, could not wholly dissemble a kind of joy as he listened to the dialogue.

One passenger, however, sat persistently dumb, entrenched in the most retired corner with an air of abstracted gravity, upon which nobody dared intrude, so appropriate did it seem to his situation. For he had been the travelling companion of—what now lay in the third-class waiting-room, a fact which made nervous people huddle together at the furthest end of their own apartment and feel chills whenever the door between was opened, or they heard heavy feet clumping on the other side of the lath-and-plaster partition. In consideration of his affliction and presumable social standing as the friend of a millionaire Scotch baronet, whose magnificence was known even among the byways of Croftshire, he had been offered accommodation in the station-master's private room, but had rightly counted upon finding more immunity from conversational claims when merged with the unprivileged outsiders. What had befallen him was shocking enough to make it natural that he should wish for a space wherein to collect himself. His friendship with Gillespie Feraston had lasted through several years, at a time when years are young and long, and had furthermore been toughened by the process of rough kneading which such metal undergoes in the course of a torrid campaign, where there are encampments prowled round by famine and pestilence, and occasionally fields rife with compacter forms of death 'whizzing in the air' like the exhalations in Brutus's orchard. And on this very afternoon, the eve of his wedding-day, as he slid across the breadths of green and gold harvest-land, that one-tenth of his thoughts which was not exclusively reserved for Miss Ellice Shane had been mainly occupied by 'old Gil' and his many excellent qualities and kindly deeds.

The latest of these was writ large in Gil's presence there, prisoner for seven sultry hours in a blue-cloth padded cell, with two splendid shooting-days sacrificed to the dismal duty of acting as poor Tom Denmer's best man, that good office which no friend can ever repay in kind. But Tom recollected many others, remoter in date, yet not less clear in memory than the proofs of friendship which had been directly elicited by his engagement—the Highland castle and Mediterranean yacht placed at the dis-

posal of bride and bridegroom—the sumptuous plate and superb emeralds, which gave such brilliance to the else unimposing array of wedding presents on view in the dingy library at Hinthorpe Grange. Perhaps Tom unconsciously turned in preference to the earlier rather than to these more modern instances, because meditation upon the latter would sometimes mingle with wishes that it were in his own power to lay the like desirable things profusely at his *fiancée's* feet—very bootless aspirations for 300*l.* a year and one's pay. Such discontents, however, were mere fleeting cloud-flecks, with scarcely substance enough to throw a shadow as they passed. For, given Ellice, what was the whole world beside? Almost a fraction with infinity for its denominator, which, as everybody knows, equals nought.

And now here was the summary end of all—wealth, and sport, and campaigning, and the comradeship which was to have triumphantly stood the crucial test of matrimony, but had found a harder one inexorably imposed by fate. On the way up to the station Tom had heard the four men speak once or twice of what they were carrying as 'it,' and the little monosyllable had appealed more forcibly to his imagination than volumes of threnodic eloquence could have done. The long western rays and the commonplace objects which they slanted dazzlingly upon seemed suddenly invested with a sort of familiar unreality, as if he had always known them to be only shams, and the inward effect of this was so curiously bewildering that it made him fitfully apprehensive lest his outward mien should appear correspondingly strange. Even before the dust of a world-cataclysm has begun to settle, a man instinctively reckons with neighbours' eyes. But, in fact, nobody was surprised to see him sit like one who had been stunned, gazing blankly at the floor, or aimlessly unfolding and folding a sheet of white paper which he held in his unsteady hand. He had quite sufficient reason, everyone thought, for being dazed and confounded; and he presently had more than they guessed.

That bit of paper had been handed to him as he entered the waiting-room by a solemn guard, who said: 'Picked this up down yonder, sir; ain't sure whether it b'longs to you, or might ha' dropped out o' t' other gentleman's coat when they were a-lifting him.' 'It's mine,' Tom had answered unhesitatingly as he saw the handwriting, and, having taken the note, he continued to hold it automatically for some minutes, sitting there in his corner, until in the same mechanical fashion he unfolded it, and began to

run his eyes along the lines, with so little thought, indeed, of what they were doing, that they read it through twice before the fact dawned upon him that it was *not* his after all—had never been meant to meet his eye, though it was written by his Ellice's hand, and signed with her name, and smelt still of the cedarwood box in which she kept her envelopes. It was not a long note, nor difficult to understand, when one gave one's mind to it; and it ran as follows:—

‘I will be at Tollenford Junction to-morrow evening in time to meet the quarter to seven train. You will find me somewhere in the lane not far from the railway bridge, the one near the gate into the hilly field with the queer-shaped elder-bush—you know the place. There is no train on, I fear, for more than an hour; however, that can't be helped. I think we had better go straight to the *Foam Bell*, as it would not take long to get to Glynmouth; but we can settle all that when you meet yours ever,—ELLICE.’

There was neither date nor address, but this did not obscure the purport of the little missive. It all seemed very clear and plain to Tom, as he surveyed the situation dispassionately, going over the circumstances in his own mind quite coolly and quietly. An avalanche, too, is sometimes deliberate and even gentle in its movements, when it begins to slide down the bare slope, until its smooth white lip grows into a swelling frieze along the crest of the dark crags. After that, there is less to be said for its self-control. Tollenford Junction—yes, that was the next station but one to Hinthorpe, Ellice's home, and a branch line ran from it to Glynmouth, where Gil's yacht lay within reach, as she said. And, to be sure, Gil had mentioned on starting that he must stop so far short of Hinthorpe and follow Tom by a later train, as he wanted to look up an old friend at Tollenford. Why, just before the accident happened he had fished down his hat and pocketed his cap, for they were coming near the place, and uncertain whether there would be a stop on the way—a doubt set at rest with a fine irony by the very full stop which had intervened. Tom remembered having felt pleased at the time to think that, since Gil wished to see this old friend, he would not have his long journey quite for nothing. His *long* journey—*how* long had it been? That new blank shadow seemed to unfurl itself at Tom's feet, turn where he would; all the more shockingly now when he ever and anon lost sight of it in the sudden thunder-glooms which were shifting and drifting round him on a stormy wind.

How smoothly and pleasantly they had arranged their plans! The convenient rendezvous—the glib matter-of-fact lie—the white-winged yacht ready close by to carry them off over sunny seas; they could not have picked out a finer evening in the whole summer. No hitch apparent, except just that hour's wait for the Glynmouth train. Probably, however, they would not find the time drag unendurably. Otherwise, why didn't Gil order a special? The expense would be nothing to him—as it happened, literally nothing at all. Good heavens! was he going mad, and possessed by a devil too? or what was he sneering at? Again that shadow before him, very dark and cold.

'The gate into the hilly field'—Ellice might be waiting there by this time, for it must be getting near seven o'clock. There was a train from Hinthorpe about six, which he used to catch when he ran down on a day's leave; fourteen hours of third-class compartment to, it might be, half a dozen at the Grange. All through that afternoon Tom had more or less had in his imagination a picture of Ellice waiting and watching for someone, so it was perhaps unreasonable of him now to be utterly taken aback by the idea, as if it were an unprecedented horror sprung upon him; but then the someone had not been Gillespie Feraston, which certainly made a great difference. Such an immense one, in fact, that he could grasp it only by degrees; and as he began gradually to realise its full scope and bearings, something of the nature of an insurrection rose up in his mind against the imposition of this novel and monstrous article of belief, based on a wretched scrap of paper. A counter-current of passionate doubt and denial rushed in to oppose the murky flood which had suddenly swept over his securest trust and pride, and the ensuing turmoil waxed so fierce that he could no longer keep up even the outward semblance of calm. He started to his feet without any definite purpose beyond the blind impulse of strong feeling to translate itself into action; and the course it was to take was unwittingly determined by the station-master, who at this moment entered the room.

He came to announce, with considerable self-complacency, the completion of the arrangements for forwarding the delayed travellers upon their way, a result which he regarded as wholly due to his own administrative abilities.

'Ardly arf an hour behind time arter all,' he said blandly; 'not much to complain of, I'm sure, gentlemen, under the cir-

cumstances. The signal's down, and she'll be steaming in directly.'

An approaching screech corroborated the statement, and Tom simultaneously formed a resolution. 'It stops at Tollenford Junction?' he said, putting up the note and going towards the door.

'Certainly, sir; due there at seven-ten. But you aren't leaving, sir?' said the station-master in a remonstrant tone, for such a proceeding did not by any means accord with his sense of the fitness of things. 'There'll be a deal of arrangements to make, sir, you'll be aware. I was just coming to consult you when I'd started these here. What about telegrams? and the Hingue——'

'I'll come back directly—by the next train,' said Tom, his purpose consolidated by this slight shock of opposition. 'There'll be time then for all that. It's absolutely necessary for me to go.'

That was true enough. The complex torment of suspense, the crushing weight of fear, the fluttering of a feeble hope, the sting of amazed wrath, even a feeling of common consideration for the girl, who at that very moment might have begun to wonder ignorantly about the cause of an unaccountable tarrying—all these impelled him to go and meet the worst. His fate cried out and told him that the supreme crisis could be neither evaded nor postponed. So in a few minutes he was again on his way through the last glow of the mocking golden sunlight, leaving behind him the place where he had seen one tract of his life overwhelmed by a swift surging up of chaos, and had received more than a warning that all the rest of it would presently lie shattered around him in irremediable ruin. And with every pant of the engine that brought him nearer to his goal the tension of his nerves tightened more and more in the grip of the surmise—he dared not call it by a less ambiguous name: What would he find when he got there?

What he would find was a question which, at more than one period in the course of that day, might have puzzled the most far-seeing onlooker to answer with confidence, despite the decisive tone of Miss Shane's compromising little note. Perhaps the event had wavered most dubiously in the balance about three o'clock in the afternoon, when Mrs. Shane, hearing a light step on the stairs, had sent a shrill call of 'Ellice' from the faded blue-room of Hinthorpe Grange, where, with the help of a deeply-

interested housemaid, she was packing up part of her daughter's modest trousseau. The bride-elect came and stood for a minute in the doorway. A graceful but not slenderly-fashioned figure, more than commonly tall, rich coils and silky ripples of blue-black hair, a pale olive complexion, a mouth 'softe and reed,' like Chaucer's Prioress's; very dark eyes, 'alive in their depths,' like Lord Walter's wife's—that was Ellice Shane at nineteen. Her mother had called her in to show her some small ornamental additions to the outfit after which the girl had hankered, and which Mrs. Shane, by dint of much painstaking ingenuity, had managed to elicit from scanty resources for a parting surprise. Ellice, with the matter-of-course carelessness of a spoiled child, did not trouble herself to express any lively gratitude on the occasion; yet as she looked at the unfolded skirts and half-filled trunks, and general litter of odds and ends, which, as she knew, represented prolonged industry, both mental and manual, on the part of her mother, she suddenly experienced a violent attack of the spasmodically recurring conviction that she could not possibly carry out her meditated treachery. Through this trivial instance of her mother's affection and care for her the capricious track of her thoughts somehow led her to the larger fact of Tom's devotion, the proved ardour and loyalty of which seemed all at once to shine transfigured against the dark background of that perfidious requital.

As Ellice stood by the door, to all appearances rather minutely examining a lace collarette, her thoughts were travelling far afield in a very desperate hurry. Only broken and incoherent fragments emerged into clear consciousness out of the bewildering whirl, but their drift was unmistakable enough.

'I don't—no, I *don't* care for either of them; but I could for Tom, if I chose—never for the other. They're both much too good for me, though, that's certain. Why is Tom so poor, and so bent upon sticking to that stupid regiment? I dare say he could make his fortune somehow if he left it. Would Sir Gillespie tell if I gave it all up now?' Miss Shane had hardly outgrown the schoolgirl's phraseology. 'I don't believe he would, if I asked him not—he's very good; it was all my fault. But—but even if he did, I think I could trust Tom to stand by me. Poor Tom! How could I manage to send a message to Tollenford in time? There's the Johnsons' boy, only he's so stupid. . . .'. Whence the reader will perceive that the scales were very nicely poised

indeed. This state of instable equilibrium was, however, of but short duration, being overthrown by one of those trifles, seemingly light as air, which, in the hands of fate, often acquire a portentous specific gravity.

Mrs. Shane was a person of constitutionally restless and anxious mind, as any one might have guessed from her meagre frame, jerky movements, and face etched over with a network of fine wrinkles, due less to her fifty years than to the domestic economies of a large household yearly growing more expensive in defiance of a small and stationary income. Her fidgety eye was now caught, and her thrifty soul vexed, by what struck her as her daughter's excess of apparel.

'My dear,' she said, in the tone of one who anticipates yet cannot forbear to risk a rebuff, 'why have you put on that nice new tweed? It's a pity to wear it out here. One of your old dresses that you are leaving behind would have done very well for to-day, and then I could have packed that up.'

Ellice listened with an altogether incommensurate revulsion of feeling. The vaguer images which had been floating through her mind—Tom's despair—a consternation-stricken home—all the menacing possibilities of an untried future—these vanished like a mist before the sharply-outlined presentment of certain hard, sordid, and familiar facts. And though she replied with unwonted amiability: 'Oh! I'll be sure to change it in time,' she said doggedly to herself, '*I will* make an end of it. *I will* get done with all this pinching and screwing and worrying. What is the good of one's life if one can have nothing that one likes? I know I shall like being rich, and at any rate I can make sure of being that.'

An hour or so later Ellice stole down one of the Grange's overgrown shrubberies, and out through a small side gate which opened into the churchyard. Her field-path route led across a corner of it; but as she came near the church she heard sounds which made her slip behind the screen of a thick yew-hedge. A group of young people, chiefly girl-contemporaries of hers, had been preparing decorations for the morrow's ceremony, and were now with abundant chatter and laughter conveying into the porch the coils of a long garland composed of wheat and poppies and cornflowers. As Ellice furtively peeped and overheard, she gave a momentary regret to the thoughts of a shimmering white silk gown and a misty veil hung in her wardrobe at home; but

she conquered the pang with a charm which contained the potent names of 'Lady Feraston' and 'diamonds.' Just then, happening to glance at her gloveless hand, she saw that she had forgotten to take off Tom's ring, a pearl hoop with ruby sparks, which had cost much more than he could well afford. Close to where she stood was the tomb of one Henry Chapman, Esquire, a stately drab-brick structure, adorned on the side with a black marble urn enveloped in white marble drapery sculptured in high relief. The folds of this drapery were full of rain, which had fallen in the night. Ellice remembered how, not so long ago, she had enjoyed dabbling in them with smaller fingers; and into one of them, prompted by a half-childish freak of fancy, she now dropped her ring. The gold and pearls flashed bright gleams after her through the water and sunshine as she turned away. All the girls had gone into the church, and she could continue her journey safely.

When Tom's train arrived at Tollenford Junction the sun had almost finished setting with a grandeur quite thrown away upon him. It was with feelings wholly apart from any æsthetic appreciation of flames and amber light that he saw how a plantation of mingled elms and firs to the left made a pattern of clubs and spear-heads sombrely against the clear saffron sky; he only recognised it as a remembered landmark which showed that he was nearing the place. At this time he for a few moments entertained thoughts of going on straight to Hinthorpe, lured by a heavenly vision of there, after all, finding Ellice innocently waiting for him among her hollyhocks and roses in the twilit Grange garden, and of blissfully awakening from the diabolical nightmare of suspicion which that miserable paper-scrap had conjured up around him. But he soon averted his eyes resolutely from this fair mirage; and when the train stopped he stood up, though his knees shook and his pulses were knocking double knocks in his throat and temples, and stepped out on to the deserted platform with considerably less equanimity, it is true, than if it had been occupied in force by hostile wielders of assegais or antique-patterned rifles. Tollenford is never a centre of much traffic, and on that evening very few passengers alighted, and nobody else was in sight, except a porter, busily engaged in getting details of 'the accident down below' from the guard, and borrowing a newspaper to ascertain the fate of his half-crowns among the sporting intelligence; also an extremely ancient decrepit man, who sat on a distant bench.

Tom, to whom things still seemed unreal and uncanny, felt rather at a loss as he stood looking across the rails towards the elaborately rustic station-house, with its trim flower-borders of scarlet, yellow, and blue, and trails of purple-blossomed creeper. He naturally did not wish to draw attention upon himself and his errand by inquiries, yet he could not tell in what direction he must look for the lane with the gate into the hilly field. 'Of course I don't "know the place" so well as Gil does,' he said bitterly to himself, and once more was caught up short by the incongruous tense. It appeared obvious, however, that the first thing to be done was to get over to the other side, where lay the exit from the station, and he accordingly ascended the white lattice-work bridge by which the public are enjoined to effect the passage, not venturing upon the permissible 'forthrights' of officials.

The high-striding bridge offered a convenient post of vantage whence to survey the topography of the unfamiliar neighbourhood, and Tom paused on the top to look about him. Light was by this time ebbing steadily, but had not yet mixed with the dimming tide of dusk; objects were still almost as clear as at noon, and his eye was immediately caught by two figures, who, at perhaps a hundred yards' distance, were walking away from him along a footpath which skirted the edge of the embankment where it rose steeply above the line. One of them was Ellice; that he needed no second glance to assure himself of this will be easily understood by all who are aware how the sharpness of lovers' eyes recognise their lady in the flutter of a ribbon-end, as an expert osteologist can construct a palæolithic saurian from an inch or two of vertebrae. And at first sight he affirmed with equal certitude that her companion was Gil. So indisputable did this appear that, although a host of ghastly recollections at once sprung up imperiously commanding him to dismiss such a wild hallucination, he looked again and again, and could not effectually contradict the present evidence of his senses. It was only by degrees that he argued himself into acceptance of what he must needs regard as propositions of reason. He could swear—following with strained gaze the receding figures—he could have sworn that it was Gil; but—but maybe a mistake of the kind was natural enough under the circumstances—it certainly was getting duskish—and the confusing want of individuality in the British male costume might account for much—no doubt it was all

imagination—the figures were further off now, and less distinct—of course, in fact, it *could* be nothing else.

But, then, who *was* walking there with Ellice? Manifold were the hypotheses which crowded into the vacuum left by the abandonment of his first untenable theory. Was it merely some casually met acquaintance? Or had her flight been detected and overtaken? Or had Ellice herself laid a trap for the false friend, and sought the rendezvous attended by her prim parson uncle or big undergraduate brother, in approved old farcical fashion? If so, the farce had abruptly developed into tragedy with a complete disregard of all established rules. Tom's mind was full of these and other more or less likely conjectures as he hurried down the opposite side of the bridge and set out in pursuit of that pair. They were not walking fast, and he gained rapidly upon them, until he purposely slackened his steps. Countless chill fears and reluctances made him shrink and shiver on the brink of the plunge into sheer certainty. And amongst these one monstrous dread presently began to loom predominant like an iceberg through an arctic fog; for, as he drew nearer and nearer, that first impression, which he had banished at the bidding of hard facts, returned to him, reinforced by an array of facts no less obdurate—the testimony of his senses—of eyes that to their amazement did behold—of ears, loath to admit, yet powerless to bar their portals. Gil—it was his friend Gil, and nobody else, whom he saw Ellice following along that narrow footpath! Let rise what forbidding visions would of ugly sights that cried out upon the one before his eyes, there it was notwithstanding, and could not be scared away. Every suggestion of possible mistake or illusion became liable to a flat contradiction; Tom might as well have tried to feel doubtful about the studs in his cuffs or the crunch of his own footsteps upon the gravel. More than once Gil looked back at Ellice, thereby showing his face in full, with sun-tanned complexion, tow-coloured moustache and all just as usual. They appeared to be carrying on an animated conversation, and the sound of both voices came to Tom with perfect familiarity, though he could not catch the purport of what they said, while ever and anon Gil's well-known shrill-pitched laugh seemed to set incredulity in a purely ludicrous light.

This conviction, thrusting itself irresistibly upon Tom's belief, came accompanied by a feeling of profound horror, equally irresistible in its entry, and more pervasive in its seizure of every

faculty and sense. It must be owned that his immediate impulse was to turn and flee, an impulse only routed after a sharp skirmish between soul and legs. The impossibility of leaving Ellice to her unimaginable fate in that fearful companionship did eventually stand its ground as a cogent and coercive fact; but this was by dint of a rebellious struggle of his higher against his lower nature, altogether different from the swift simultaneous rallying of all powers mental and physical which the perception of any mere mortal peril to her would have evoked. Such has ever been the recoil of the astounded body when a spirit goes before its face.

Having definitely decided not to run away, Tom saw no course open save to follow the steps of his two friends until he either gained courage to spontaneously interrupt their *tête-à-tête* or was compelled to do so by force of circumstances. He held on, therefore, at a wary distance, faring towards the fading western glow; and as he went the grotesquely elongated shadows of the pair in front stretched back to him, sometimes almost reaching to his feet. Once, indeed, he actually trod on the faint outline of Gil's head, and stood still for a moment, stricken with a sort of benumbing panic. Then on again, along the rising and sinking slopes of the embankment; past thrifty patches of potatoes or kidney-beans, trimmed screens of clipped laurels, unkempt clumps of trailing brambles, and regularly recurring telegraph-posts with their dolorous drone, for what seemed an interminable tract, though in reality it was not a very large fraction of a mile. At last it ended.

They had come to a place where the high path, which here tended downwards, made an abrupt sweep to the left hand, curving out on the face of a smooth-swarded glaxis, instead of leaving, as hitherto, a yard or so of grass-border to fend off the outer edge. The cause of this aberration was obvious enough, since the track, if continued undeflected for a few paces more, would have arrived at the brink of a great red-walled chasm, originally filled by Nature with a huge block of sandstone, but long ago laboriously scooped by man into a deep quarry-hole. An inadequate attempt had been made to exclude trespassers from those dangerous premises—where they were so likely to get beyond the reach of legal prosecution—by means of a feeble and futile fence, which at present with its prone uprights and dishevelled wires left nothing to impede the wayfarer's access save some tangled wisps of long grasses.

And now Tom saw with unspeakable consternation that Gil, instead of keeping to the footpath, was walking on in a straight line, which in less than half a minute must lead him to the verge of the precipice, and that Ellice was unconcernedly following. The sight filled him with a despairing wrath, which at the outset paralysed him as if by a spell, and then goaded him into action. For the first time in this horrible crisis of his fate he felt impelled to make a desperate struggle against it, and springing forward he tried to raise a shout of warning, but his throat was parched, and the hoarse strangled croak which he uttered suggested quinsy rather than mortal anguish. Ellice, however, was reached, and for an instant arrested by the sound. She paused, not a yard from the edge, and half turned round; but at this moment Gil stooped his face close to hers and said something to her in a low hissing whisper, which slid in and out of the silence as a scorpion glides rustling between two stones; and before it had ended she had put her hand in his and taken one step more—over the brink. A shriek—a crash of snapping twigs and clatter of rolling pebbles—at last a dull thud—and that was all!

The headlong leap forward, by which Tom sought to intercept or follow, proved a vain endeavour, for he caught his foot in a nooselike grass tuft, so that, baulked of dashing sheer down the precipice, he only fell, with a violently wrenched ankle, upon a shelving briar-grown ledge, quite close to the top. And when his stunned senses after a while crept dimly back, he made no second attempt to join Ellice. He felt dazed and cold, and sick with the pain in his wrenched ankle; and it is not easy to pluck resolve from such physical conditions. So he dragged himself up again to the hole's mouth, where he lingered aimlessly for, as it seemed, many ages, until a bewildered notion that help should somehow be sought on Ellice's behalf aroused him from his lethargy and sent him moving again through what was now a dark night. But he had lost hold of even this vaguely guiding purpose before his intermittent groping and stumbling brought him back to Tollenford Junction, and when he reached it he did nothing more effectual than sit down on a stack of sleepers in a siding. Here he was found, about sunrise, by two labourers on their way to work. They were slow-witted, unimaginative persons, yet did not fail to arrive at the conviction that there was 'summat mighty queer' about this stranger, who, in reply to their inquiries, said he was waiting there for Gil—his friend, Sir

Gillespie Feraston, and then suddenly clapped his hands to his ears, exclaiming *daft-like*: 'You needn't tell me—you needn't tell me—I saw it go over his head.'

As Tom's answers to further questioning, official and amateur, were scarcely more lucid and coherent, it is fortunate that people had not to depend upon him for an account of the circumstances attending his *fiancée's* terrible fate, which was brought to light in the course of that day by the discovery of her dead body at the bottom of the pit. An explanation, in every way far more satisfactory, indeed, than he could have supplied, was clearly forthcoming. For Ellice's old nurse, one Mrs. Hadden, a North-country widow much crippled by rheumatism, lived in a lonely little cottage not far from the fatal quarry-hole and a certain hilly field of which mention has been made, and Ellice was wont to visit her occasionally, taking a short cross-country route. She had done so, it had been remarked, more frequently than usual through the past summer, and there was now nothing antecedently improbable in a theory that she had paid a farewell visit on the eve of her wedding. This fact, however, was lifted above the plane of hypothesis by some perfectly conclusive evidence. Not only had Ellice told her mother where she was going, but the old woman herself could testify that she had received a visit. Her own often-repeated account of it was to the following effect:

She should say it was well on past seven o'clock; anyway the dusk had begun to close in, and she was hirpling about the grass bit by the door: 'Pulling myself a bunch o' poppies I was, for I've a fancy to keep a mug o' them by the bed o' nights; they make a body sleepy like, when I looked up, and what should I see but poor Miss Ellice standing outside the little gate. I was surprised enough at that, never expecting she'd ha' had time to come that evening, and it being so late and all, and I thought maybe she was meaning just to bid me good-bye as she passed, so I hobbled down to her as best I could and asked her in. But says she, sure enough, "No, nurse, I mustn't wait," she says, "I'm only come to say good-bye." I noticed she was looking a bit white and peaky, and says I to her, for she seemed to be minding the bunch o' poppies I had in my hand: "You'll be wearing bonnier flowers than these to-morrow, Miss Ellice," I says; but all she said to that was: "There are redder ones up at the old quarry-hole." And says I: "Eh, now, Miss Ellice, don't be clambering about

there, for I'm told it's a shocking dangerous place, and one you'd never get out of if you happened to slip in." And says she: "Oh, no fear of that—but I must go." And with that she went off in a hurry like as if she'd heard somebody calling. I thought maybe one of the young gentlemen, or the captain, was waiting for her. "No fear of that," she says—and they to be finding her there the very next morning!

Hence it was easy enough—this brief colloquy having incidentally given so obvious a clue—to understand how the disaster had come about: Ellice, stopping on her way home to pluck those red poppies which grew profusely round the quarry-hole's treacherous brink, had overbalanced herself, or missed her footing, and fallen in. Such a simple explanation was not likely to be discredited by any wild and impossible statements which might proceed from poor Tom, who lay raving in a fever, the not unnatural result of a great mental shock, aggravated, perhaps, by some more mechanical injury to the brain, sustained unawares in the railway accident. Nor, when he recovered, as he did before the end of the month's leave, which should have contained his wedding tour, was there any danger of his disturbing those reasonable inferences by a more intelligible version of the strange story whereupon his delirious wanderings had harmlessly turned. For his resumption of his faculties was not *quite* complete, his memory, as often happens in like cases, having passed an act of oblivion with regard to all that had taken place immediately before the coming on of his illness. Thus, every event of his journey to Tollenford being blotted out, he had to learn anew the fate of his friend and of his *fiancée*; and as Ellice's luckless note had fluttered away somewhere, and was seen no more, he never regained his knowledge that they had both been lost to him while they were yet alive.

This ignorance was probably, on the whole, a happy one for Tom, whose disposition would have made it very hard for him to 'scorn and let go' anything of which his affections had once taken a grip. Perhaps, too, it did not utterly mislead him, after all. The friend who had stood by him loyally in more than one emergency was as real a person as he who had turned traitor under stress of a later temptation. And it may be that Ellice's inglorious conquest by a hankering after the world's gear would not have proved final and irretrievable. These speculations, how-

ever, have no practical bearing upon the fortunes of Tom, who changed his regiment and went eastward—

To an old palm-land of tombs,
Washed clear of our yesterday,

where life seemed easier to face again.

Ellice's engagement-ring still lies in the folds of the marble napkin on Mr. Chapman's ugly brick tomb, and will possibly lie there until her story is quite forgotten in the neighbourhood, so that the finding of it may evolve many ingenious conjectures as to how it came into so unlikely a receptacle. But the chances are that nobody's invention will hit upon a more tragical explanation than one which, as we know, 'is true 'tis pity.'

OUR STONE CRUSADERS.

THERE is a popular impression concerning the sculptured effigies of the knights of old that enrich so many of our ancient churches to the effect that when they are wrought with their legs crossed at the ankles it is to record the fact that those they represented made one journey to the Holy Land, or took part in one crusade; and when they are fashioned with their legs crossed at the knees, it is to indicate that the brave men whose memory they were meant to perpetuate journeyed three times across Europe to the same sacred site; and when the legs are crossed midway between the ankles and the knees, it is because the knights in question made but two of these long and perilous journeys. It would, perhaps, not be very difficult to ascertain whether this impression is founded on fact, for we should have but to look into the personal histories of a convincing number of such of the individuals thus represented who can be identified, and note whether the attitudes in which they are sculptured correspond with their achievements in this particular; but it is sufficient for our present purpose merely to mention it. Another impression that has been current concerns the disposition of the hands of these relics. When the hands are sculptured as folded in prayer, they have been fancifully translated to mean that the dead knight represented had returned from the crusade, and had died in peace at home; when wrought in the act of drawing his sword, that it was to show that he had died in battle, fighting for the Holy Land; and when placed as sheathing his sword, that he had died on his way home, after his mission was accomplished.

We are often more attracted by these memorials when we come upon them in our village churches than when we see them in our cathedrals and great abbey churches with their more sumptuous surroundings. Sometimes in such simple edifices, even in remote places, they are much mutilated, occasionally to the extent of half their original proportions; and sometimes they are so completely detached from all evidence of ownership as to baffle every attempt at identification; but, for the most part, we find them undisturbed in their stately deathfulness and mute appeal. Their lifelike size, their inscrutableness and seclusion,

the sacredness and silence of their associations, the acute sense of the lapse of centuries since those who sculptured them awaited the commendations or adverse criticisms of the mourners at whose bidding they had wrought, and our realisation of our own remoteness from the tone and feeling of the old old times to which they belong, produce an effect upon us that is difficult to describe accurately.

In Banbury Church, Essex, there are three of these effigies all clad in chain armour. Two of them lie under arches in the north wall, and the other is placed against the east end of the north aisle. They are all cross-legged, and their feet all rest on lions; but each man and each lion is in a different position. The hands of one knight are folded and his sword is sheathed, and the lion at his feet is looking towards his face. One of the others is in the act of drawing his sword, and the lion at his feet is turning his head away from him; and the third is sheathing his sword, whilst the lion looks straight before him. They are all now nameless and unknown. There is a handsome effigy of a Crusader in Hacombe Church. His legs are crossed at the knees. He is clad from head to foot in beautifully ornamented armour which has a foliated pattern wrought upon it, over which is disposed a long tunic open at the knees. With both hands, which are gauntleted, he grasps his sword. His head lies on a small cushion placed cornerways on a larger one, and his feet rest on a lion. Only the tip of his nose has been damaged in the centuries that have passed since this memorial was placed in its present position. In Holbeach Church, Lincolnshire, on a richly-sculptured but now crumbling tomb, lies an effigy with the legs not crossed at all, but straight and outstretched against a crouching lion. His sword is now broken and his shield frayed at the edges, but as the light shines upon the prostrate form one cannot but be impressed by it. In Beer Ferris, in flowery Devonshire, under an arched recess in the ancient church, reposes the figure of a knight clad in chain armour, the legs of which have been broken off at the knees, where they were crossed, and carried away. Notwithstanding this mutilation there is an effect of endurance and persistence as well as pathos about this form that is very attractive.

Passing from village to village, in this way, across the breadth and length of our pleasant land, we will look into Chillingham Church, on the borders of Chillingham Park, where the wild white cattle of the ancient Britons still roam at large, and where the

Cheviots make a vast jagged boundary between England and Scotland. This little edifice, which was built so long ago as the days of Norman rule, has been kindly dealt with, in so far as only a few additions have been made to it, and much of the original fabric is left standing. Two of the principal additions—and these were made four or five hundred years ago—are north and south aisles to the chancel. And in the south aisle, on a large tomb, repose two life-sized effigies, the one being a knight and the other his wife, with two angels kneeling at their feet. One end of the tomb is built close up against the western wall of the aisle, but on the other three sides we may see there are panels filled with figures and heraldic devices alternately. From the heraldry it is clear that these effigies represent Sir Ralph Grey, who died in 1443, and his wife, Elizabeth Fitz-Hugh. For four centuries and a half, then, in this remote little structure, these figures have lain unharmed; only the gilding and bright colours with which parts of the monument were once adorned give any indication of the wear of time, though some years ago ivy found its way through the walls and hung in festoons from the under side of the roofs of both nave and chancel, and other signs of indifference were apparent in it. Sir Ralph Grey and Elizabeth Fitz-Hugh (who, it may be noticed, was entitled to quarter the arms of Marmion) probably lived in Chillingham Castle, close by, more than two hundred years before Inigo Jones built the columniated frontage to it that we now see.

In another village church in the same county there is a fragment of a sculptured knightly effigy that has not been so well used. This lies, or rather stands, for it has been placed on end, in Bolam Church, a structure of Saxon antiquity. This is one of the instances in which identification is impossible, as it is no longer associated with any heraldic intimation. It consists of the upper part of the figure, which is represented as clad in chain armour. In a neighbouring church, at Ingram, there is a still smaller fragment preserved, consisting of the feet only. Fortunately, dismemberment of this kind is exceptional.

Not many miles away, in the nave of Bothal Church, there may be seen very superb examples of similar sculptural art that have been well cared for. These are the effigies of Ralph, Lord Ogle, and Lady Margaret Gascoigne, executed in alabaster. The tomb on which they are placed is built against the south-east pier of the chancel arch, and is spanned by the first arch from the nave into

the aisle. There is a great castle in ruins within a good stone's-throw, and the church is very much out of repair, and partly buried in accumulations of soil, but these figures, with the suggestion their presence makes that they represent those who once lived in the one and worshipped in the other, when they were both at their best, form a centre of radiating interest. Before passing from this county, an effigy in chain armour may be mentioned that has lain for many centuries in Bamborough Church, which, though its own sculptural evidence shows it to be that of a mediæval knight, has drawn to itself so much out of the Arthurian legend (Bamborough is recognised as the Garde Joyeuse) as to be popularly known as Sir Lancelot.

Few village churches have more pathetic memorials than Astley Church, in the core of Warwickshire, where upon the floor, without sarcophagi, or bases, or protecting canopy or arched recesses, may be seen three stone effigies, one here, one there, and one further on, two of which represent the mother and father of Lady Jane Grey, and the third, which is shorter and slighter than either, as becomed her youth, that unfortunate and uncrowned queen. These are also without heraldic devices, but the surpassing tragedy of their lives has kept their identity remembered.

Solitary effigies of females are not so general as those of knights, nevertheless they are not rare. In Haversham Church there is a monument in an arched recess to the memory of Elizabeth Lady Clinton, on which a life-sized effigy is placed. A cherub supports the pillow on which the head of the figure reposes, and an animal is placed at its feet. A veil of drapery is disposed over the head without covering the features, some of which have, unfortunately, had rough treatment. The hands are raised and folded; the robes are arranged in compact continuous lines. The sides of the monument are panelled, and in each panel are figures, chiefly angels bearing shields. In St. Austen's Church there is an instance in which a female is sculptured with a child by her side. In Alnwick Church there is an effigy of a female, wrought in the sandstone of the district, that has been detached from all association in its original position, but which from its costume is thought likely to represent the widow of the last of the De Vescies, the lords of Alnwick before the reign of the Percies. Moved about by energetic custodians, perhaps with a view to obtain more room for sittings, this figure, with two others, was placed on end for some time, but has more recently been

restored to its recumbent position. Effigies of wives associated with their husbands are, however, much more numerous. In Kings Carswell Church may be seen a memorial representing an individual of the Dinham family and his wife. The legs of this knight are not crossed, nor does he bear either sword or shield, though he has a helmet on his head and a gorget of mail round his neck. In both these figures the hands have been destroyed. The dame wears a head-dress of a coronet form, a bead necklace with a pendant, and closely fitting robes which fall in many folds about her feet. The heads of both personages rest on pillows that are smoothed or held by angels, of whom little more than the compassionate hands can now be made out. Of similar typical interest is a monument of a knight of the Fitz-Herbert family and his wife in Norbury Church, Derbyshire. The sides of this tomb are divided into six panels, in each of which are figures. On the flat top are two life-sized effigies. In this example the knight is bareheaded, and his hands are in an attitude of prayer. His wife wears a high and pointed head-dress, and a mantle kept in position over her robes by an ornamental pin. Two angels are shown at the heads of these figures and two animals at their feet.

There were three leading varieties of tombs in these old times : the stone sarcophagus or receptacle without an effigy ; those with recumbent figures shown upon them ; and the effigy placed flat on the ground without a visible tomb, like the splendid and solemn porphyry examples of the Knights-Templars still prone on the floor of the Round, or drum, in the Temple Church. Our cathedrals contain the greatest wealth in all these branches of funereal art. Beverley Minster, however, is allowed to possess the finest example in the Percy shrine. Tewkesbury Abbey church is extremely rich likewise. St. Bartholomew's Church, Smithfield, has the touching effigy of its founder, Rahere. Some of the most superb examples with effigies are to be seen in the tombs of our kings and queens in Westminster Abbey. King John's memorial in Worcester Cathedral is also a good specimen. Besides these three kinds there are the curious instances of small or miniature effigies representing adults in churches at Horsted-Keynes, Sussex ; Curry-Rivell, Somerset ; Tenbury, Worcestershire ; Elford, Staffordshire ; Mappowder, Dorsetshire ; and Marldon, Devonshire. Probably these were the result of the same phase of feeling that led to the adoption of similar small dimensions for memorial brasses, and which speedily passed away. The counties

that appear to be specially enriched by the presence of life-sized ancient effigies in their sacred buildings are Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire, Devonshire, and Buckinghamshire. There are not very many that can be referred to an earlier date than 1250. The earliest are evidently those that are shown as clad in mail armour. In the case of the latter effigy of the Black Prince on his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral, his actual costume, so faithfully preserved, is reproduced with so much accuracy as to include the half of a fleur-de-lys in the embroidery on his jupon, which preciseness leads us to the conclusion that exactness in details was a point that was considered by the artists who made these memorials, and that probably they extended this care to a perpetuation of the features of their subjects.

Some of the effigies of later centuries, though not so pathetic as those of the inscrutable and nameless knights, are very striking. Even in Stratford-upon-Avon Church, where it might be taken for granted that all thought would be concentrated upon the grave and monument of Shakespeare, we cannot but be detained by the presentments of the Earl of Totnes, Commander-in-Chief in Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth, and his countess. These are in alabaster and coloured to represent life; and they lie in quiet sumptuous state in the Clopton Chapel in the north aisle. On the wall by the side of the tomb is a long panel with seven small figures sculptured upon it to portray their children, three of whom, from their swathing-clothes, evidently died in infancy; and on a panel, or tablet, above this are armorial bearings. In the same chapel is buried Sir Edward Walker, Garter King-at-Arms in the time of Charles I., whose epitaph came from the pen of Sir William Dugdale; and as we look upon all the emblematic details around us we feel that the heart of heraldry is spread out to our view, and that there is more to be deciphered in this unspoken language than is dreamt of by the possessors of only the ordinary amount of information concerning it. Another superbly rich Elizabethan tomb, in a much smaller edifice, is left to us in Boreham Church, Essex. This was erected to the memory of Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, Lord Chamberlain, and known as the stern opponent of Leicester. Three knights in martial costumes lie on the tomb-slab, one of which is his son and the other his grandson. Walpole incidentally states that the Earl bequeathed 1,500*l.* to be expended on this tomb, and that his executors agreed with a Dutch sculptor, Richard Stevens, to

execute his part of the work for 292*l.* 12*s.* 8*d.* The Earl and his son were first buried in the church of St. Laurence Pountney, in the metropolis, and then removed to Boreham at the instance of the grandson.

In addition to the large numbers of effigies that mark the last resting-places of military personages and civilians, there are many others that indicate those of the early clergy. In Ely Cathedral, for instance, there are venerable, hoary, and crumbling presentments of Hugh Northwold, Bishop of Ely in 1224, and of William de Kilkenny, Bishop of Ely in 1256. In Hereford Cathedral are two ancient effigies, the one of Peter de Aquablanca, who died Bishop of Hereford in 1260, and the other of James Aquablanca, Archdeacon, who died in 1320, both of which are of moment. And, not to catalogue too many examples, most of our cathedrals have similar relics.

Those of our readers who have already taken an interest in this subject, that is so far from us and yet so near in the lesson of the limits of man's remembrance, may be pleased to be reminded of it and of the knightly associations with which it is fraught; and those who have not yet looked at it may find it a mine full of agreeable investigations, and be glad that their attention has been directed to it.

THE SOWERS.

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,

AUTHOR OF 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ANGLO-RUSSIAN.

At bedtime Catrina went to Maggie's room with her to see that she had all that she could desire. A wood fire was burning brightly in the open French stove; the room was lighted by lamps. It was warm and cheery. A second door led to the little music-room which Catrina had made her own, and beyond was her bedroom.

Maggie had assured her hostess that she had everything that she could wish, and that she did not desire the services of Catrina's maid. But the Russian girl still lingered. She was slow to make friends—not shy, but diffident and suspicious. Her friendship once secured was a thing worth possessing. She was inclined to bestow it upon this quiet, self-contained English girl. In such matters the length of an acquaintance goes for nothing. A long acquaintanceship does not necessarily mean friendship—one being the result of circumstance, the other of selection.

'The Princess knows Russian?' said Catrina suddenly.

She was standing near the dressing-table, where she had been absently attending to the candles. She wheeled round and looked at Maggie, who was hospitably sitting on a low chair near the fire. She was sorry for the loneliness of this girl's life. She did not want her to go away just yet. There was another chair by the fire, inviting Catrina to indulge in those maiden confidences which attach themselves to slippers and hair-brushings.

Maggie looked up with a smile which slowly ebbed away. Catrina's remark was of the nature of a defiance. Her half-diffident rôle of hostess was suddenly laid aside.

'No; she does not,' answered the English girl.

Catrina came forward, standing over Maggie, looking down at her with eyes full of antagonism.

'Excuse me. I saw her understand a remark I made to one of the servants. She was not careful. I saw it distinctly.'

'I think you must be mistaken,' answered Maggie quietly. 'She has been in Russia before for a few weeks; but she did not learn the language. She told me so herself. Why should she pretend not to know Russian if she does?'

Catrina made no answer. She sat heavily down in the vacant chair. Her attitudes were uncouth and strong—a perpetual source of tribulation to the Countess. She sat with her elbow on her knee, staring into the fire.

'I did not mean to hate her; I did not want to,' she said. 'If it had been you, I should not have hated you.'

Maggie's clear eyes wavered for a moment. A faint colour rose to her face. She leant back so that the firelight did not reach her. There was a silence, during which Maggie unclasped a bracelet with a little snap of the spring. Catrina did not hear the sound. She heard nothing. She did not appear to be aware of her surroundings. Maggie unclasped another bracelet noisily. She was probably regretting her former kindness of manner. Catrina had come too near.

'Are you not judging rather hastily?' suggested Maggie in a measured voice, which heightened the contrast between the two. 'I find it takes some time to discover whether one likes or dislikes new acquaintances.'

'Yes; but you English are so cold and deliberate. You do not know what it is to hate—or to care.'

'Perhaps we do,' said Maggie; 'but we say less about it.'

Catrina turned and looked at her with a queer smile.

'Less!' she laughed. 'Nothing—you say nothing. Paul is the same. I have seen. I know. You have said nothing since you came to Thors. You have talked and laughed; you have given opinions; you have spoken of many things, but you have said nothing. You are the same as Paul—one never knows. I know nothing about you. But I like you. You are her cousin?'

'Yes.'

'And I hate her.'

Maggie laughed. She was quite steady and loyal.

'When you get to know her you will change perhaps,' she said.

'Perhaps I know her now better than you do!'

Maggie laughed in her cheery, practical way.

'That seems hardly likely, considering that I have known her since we were children.'

Catrina shrugged her shoulders in an honest if somewhat mannerless refusal to discuss the side issue. She returned to the main question with characteristic stubbornness.

'I shall always hate her,' she said. 'I am sorry she is your cousin. I shall always regret that, and I shall always hate her. There is something wrong about her—something none of you know except Karl Steinmetz. He knows everything—Herr Steinmetz.'

'He knows a great deal,' admitted Maggie.

'Yes; and that is why he is sad. Is it not so?'

Catrina sat staring into the fire, her strange, earnest eyes almost fierce in their concentration.

'Did she pretend that she loved him at first?' she asked suddenly.

Receiving no answer, she looked up and fixed her searching gaze on the face of her companion. Maggie was looking straight in front of her in the direction of the fire, but not with eyes focussed to see anything so near at hand. She bore the scrutiny without flinching. As soon as Catrina's eyes were averted the mask-like stillness of her features relaxed.

'She does not take that trouble now,' added the Russian girl in reply to her own question. 'Did you see her to-night when we were at the piano? Monsieur de Chauxville was talking to her. They were keeping two conversations going at the same time. I could see by their faces. They said different things when the music was loud. I hate her. She is not true to Paul. Monsieur de Chauxville knows something about her. They have something in common which is not known to Paul or to any of us! Why do you not speak? Why do you sit staring into the fire with your lips so close together?'

'Because I do not think that we shall gain anything by discussing Paul and his wife. It is no business of ours.'

Catrina laughed—a lamentable, mirthless laugh.

'That is because she is your cousin; and he—he is nothing to you. You do not care whether he is happy or not.'

Catrina had turned upon her companion fiercely. Maggie swung round in her chair to pick up her bracelets, which had slipped from her knees to the floor.

'You exaggerate things,' she said quietly. 'I see no reason to

suppose that Paul is unhappy. It is because you have taken this unreasoning dislike to her.'

She took a long time to collect three bracelets. Then she rose and placed them on the dressing-table.

'Do you want me to go?' asked Catrina in her blunt way.

'No,' answered Maggie, civilly enough; but she extracted a couple of hair-pins rather obviously.

Catrina heeded the voice and not the action.

'You English are all alike,' she said. 'You hold one at arm's length. I suppose there is someone in England for whom you care—who is out of all this—away from all the troubles of Russia. This is nothing to do with your life. It is only a passing incident—a few weeks to be forgotten when you go back. I wonder what he is like—the man in England. You need not tell me. I am not curious in that way. I am not asking you to tell me. I am just wondering. For I know there is someone. I knew it when I first saw you. You are so quiet, and settled, and self-contained—like a person who has played a game and knows for certain that it is lost or won, and does not want to play again. Your hair is very pretty; you are very pretty, you quiet English girl. I wonder what you think about behind your steady eyes.'

'I,' said Maggie, with a little laugh. 'Oh—I think about my dresses, and the new fashions, and parties, and all the things that girls do think of.'

Catrina shook her head. She looked stubborn and unconvinced. Then suddenly she changed the conversation.

'Do you like Monsieur de Chauxville?' she asked.

'No.'

'Does Paul like him?'

'I don't know.'

Catrina looked up for a moment only. Then her eyes returned to the contemplation of the burning pine-logs.

'I wonder why you will not talk of Paul,' she said, in a voice requiring no answer.

Maggie moved rather uneasily. She had her back turned towards Catrina.

'I am afraid I am rather a dull person,' she answered. 'I have not much to say about anybody.'

'And nothing about Paul?' suggested Catrina.

'Nothing. We were talking of Monsieur de Chauxville.'

'Yes; I do not understand Monsieur de Chauxville. He

seems to me to be the incarnation of insincerity. He poses—even to himself. He is always watching for the effect. I wonder what the effect of himself upon himself may be.'

Maggie laughed.

'That is rather complicated,' she said. 'It requires working out. I think he is deeply impressed with his own astuteness. If he were simpler, he would be cleverer.'

Catrina was afraid of Claude de Chauville, and because this was so she stared in wonder at the English girl, who dismissed him from the conversation and her thoughts with a few careless words of contempt. Such minds as that of Miss Delafield were quite outside the field of De Chauville's influence, while that Frenchman had considerable power over highly-strung and imaginative natures.

Catrina Lanovitch had begun by tolerating him—had proceeded to make the serious blunder of permitting him to be impertinently familiar, and was now exaggerating in her own mind the hold that he had over her. She did not actually dislike him. So few people had taken the trouble or found the expediency of endeavouring to sympathise with her or understand her nature, that she was unconsciously drawn towards this man whom she now feared.

In exaggerating the power he exercised over herself she somewhat naturally exaggerated also his importance in the world and in the lives of those around him. She had imagined him all-powerful; and the first person to whom she mentioned his name dismissed the subject indifferently. Her own entire sincerity had enabled her to detect the insincerity of her ally. She had purposely made mention of the weak spot which she had discovered in order that her observation might be corroborated. And this Maggie had failed to do.

With the slightest encouragement Catrina would have told her companion all that had passed. The sympathy between women is so strong that there is usually only one man who is safe from discussion. In Catrina's case that one man was not Claude de Chauville. But Maggie Delafield was of different material from this impressionable, impulsive Russian girl. She was essentially British in her capacity for steering a straight personal course through the shoals and quicksands of her neighbours' affairs, as also in the firm grip she held upon her own thoughts. She was by no means prepared to open her mind to the first comer, and

in her somewhat slow-going English estimate of such matters Catrina was as yet little more than the first comer.

She changed the subject, and they talked for some time on indifferent topics—such topics as have an interest for girls; and who are we that we may despise them? We jeer very grandly at girls' talk, and promptly return to the discussion of our dogs and pipes and clothing.

But Catrina was not happy under this judicious treatment. She had no one in the world to whom she could impart a thousand doubts and questions—a hundred grievances and one great grief. And it was just this one great grief of which Maggie dreaded the mention. She was quite well aware of its existence—had been aware of it for some time. Karl Steinmetz had thrown out one or two vague hints; everything pointed to it. Maggie could hardly be ignorant of the fact that Catrina had grown to womanhood loving Paul.

A score of times Catrina approached the subject, and with imperturbable steadfastness Maggie held to her determination that Paul was not to be discussed by them. She warded, she evaded, she ignored with a skill which baffled the simple Russian. She had a hundred subterfuges—a hundred skilful turns and twists. Where women learn these matters, heaven only knows! All our experience of the world, our falls and stumbles on the broken road of life, never teach us some things that are known to the veriest schoolgirl standing on the smoother footpath that women tread.

At last Catrina rose to go. Maggie rose also. Women are relentless where they fight for their own secrets. Maggie morally turned Catrina out of the room. The two girls stood looking at each other for a moment. They had nothing in common. The language in which they understood each other best was the native tongue of neither. Born in different countries, each of a mixed race with no one racial strain in common, neither creed, nor education, nor similarity of thought had aught to draw them together. They looked at each other, and God's hand touched them. They both loved the same man. They did not hate each other.

'Have you everything you want?' asked Catrina.

The question was startling. Catrina's speech was ever abrupt. At first Maggie did not understand.

'Yes, thanks,' she answered. 'I am very tired. I suppose it is the snow.'

'Yes,' said Catrina mechanically; 'it is the snow.'

She went towards the door, and there she paused.

'Does Paul love her?' she asked abruptly.

Maggie made no answer; and, as was her habit, Catrina replied to her own question.

'You know he does not—you know he does not!' she said.

Then she went out, without waiting for an answer, closing the door behind her. The closed door heard the reply.

'It will not matter much,' said Maggie, 'so long as he never finds it out.'

CHAPTER XXX.

WOLF!

THE Countess Lanovitch never quitted her own apartments before mid-day. She had acquired a Parisian habit of being invisible until luncheon-time. The two girls left the Castle of Thors in a sleigh with one attendant at ten o'clock in order to reach the hut selected for luncheon by mid-day. Etta did not accompany them. She had a slight headache.

At eleven o'clock Claude de Chauville returned alone, on horseback. After the sportsmen had separated, each to gain his prearranged position in the forest, he had tripped over his rifle, seriously injuring the delicate sighting mechanism. He found (he told the servant who opened the door for him) that he had just time to return for another rifle before the operation of closing in on the bears was to begin.

'If Madame the Princess' was visible, he went on, would the servant tell her that Monsieur de Chauville was waiting in the library to assure her that there was absolutely no danger to be anticipated in the day's sport? The Princess, it would appear, was absurdly anxious about the welfare of her husband—an experienced hunter and a dead shot.

Claude de Chauville then went to the library, where he waited, booted, spurred, rifle in hand, for Etta.

After a lapse of five minutes or more, the door was opened, and Etta came leisurely into the room.

'Well?' she inquired indifferently.

De Chauville bowed. He walked past her and closed the door, which she happened to have left open.

Then he returned and stood by the window, leaning gracefully

on his rifle. His attitude, his hunting suit, his great top-boots, made rather a picturesque object of him.

'Well?' repeated Etta, almost insolently.

'It would have been wiser to have married me,' said De Chauville, darkly.

Etta shrugged her shoulders.

'Because I understand you better; I *know* you better than your husband.'

Etta turned and glanced at the clock.

'Have you come back from the bear-hunt to tell me this, or to avoid the bears?' she asked.

De Chauville frowned. A man who has tasted fear does not like a question of his courage.

'I have come to tell you that and other things,' he answered.

He looked at her with his sinister smile and a little upward jerk of the head. He extended his open hand, palm upwards, with the fingers slightly crooked.

'I hold you, Madame,' he said—'I hold you in my hand. You are my slave, despite your brave title; my thing, my plaything, despite your servants, and your great houses, and your husband! When I have finished telling you all that I have to tell, you will understand. You will perhaps thank me for being merciful.'

Etta laughed defiantly.

'You are afraid of Paul,' she cried. 'You are afraid of Karl Steinmetz; you will presently be afraid of me.'

'I think not,' said De Chauville coolly. The two names just mentioned were certainly not of pleasant import in his ears, but he was not going to let a woman know that. This man had played dangerous cards before now. He was not at all sure of his ground. He did not know what Etta's position was in regard to Steinmetz. Behind the defiant woman there lurked the broad shadow of the man who never defied; who knew many things, but was ignorant of fear.

Unlike Karl Steinmetz, De Chauville was not a bold player. He liked to be sure of his trick before he threw down his trump card. His method was not above suspicion. He liked to know what cards his adversary held, and one may be sure that he was not above peeping.

'Karl Steinmetz is no friend of yours,' he said.

Etta did not answer. She was thinking of the conversation she had with Steinmetz in Petersburg. She was wondering

whether the friendship he had offered—the solid thing as he called it—was better than the love of this man.

'I have information now,' went on De Chauville, 'which would have made you my wife had I had it sooner.'

'I think not,' said the lady insolently. She had dealt with such men before. Hers was the beauty that appealed to De Chauville and such as he. It is not the beautiful women who see the best side of human nature.

'Even now,' went on the Frenchman, 'now that I know you—I still love you. You are the only woman I shall ever love.'

'Indeed,' murmured the lady, quite unmoved.

'Yes; although in a way I despise you—now that I know you.'

'*Mon Dieu!*' exclaimed Etta. 'If you have anything to say, please say it. I have no time to probe your mysteries—to discover your parables. You know me well enough, perhaps, to be aware that I am not to be frightened by your cheap charlatanism.'

'I know you well enough,' retorted De Chauville hoarsely, 'to be aware that it was you who sold the Charity League papers to Vassili in Paris. I know you well enough, Madame, to be aware of your present position in regard to your husband. If I say a word in the right quarter you would never leave Russia alive. I have merely to say to Catrina Lanovitch that it was you who banished her father for your own gain. I have merely to hand your name in to certain of the Charity League party, and even your husband could not save you.'

He had gradually approached her, and uttered the last words face to face, his eyes close to hers. She held her head up—erect, defiant still.

'So you see, Madame,' he said, 'you belong to me.'

She smiled.

'Hand and foot,' he added. 'But I am soft-hearted.'

He shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

'What will you?' he said, looking out of the window. 'I love you.'

'Nonsense!'

He turned slowly round.

'What?'

'Nonsense,' repeated Etta. 'You love power; you are a bully. You love to please your own vanity by thinking that you have me in your power. I am not afraid of you.'

De Chauxville leant gracefully against the window. He still held his rifle.

'Reflect a little,' he said, with his cold smile. 'It would appear that you do not quite realise the situation. Women rarely realise situations in time. Our friend—your husband—has many of the English idiosyncrasies. He has all the narrow-minded notions of honour which obtain in that country. Added to this, I suspect him of possessing a truly Slavonic fire which he keeps under. "A smouldering fire——" you know, Madame, our French proverbs. He is not the man to take a rational and broad-minded view of your little transaction with Monsieur Vassili; more especially, perhaps, as it banished his friend Stepán Lanovitch—the owner of this house, by the way. His reception of the news I have to tell him would be unpleasant—for you.'

'What do you want?' interrupted Etta. 'Money?'

'I am not a needy adventurer.'

'And I am not such a fool, Monsieur de Chauxville, as to allow myself to be dragged into a vulgar intrigue, borrowed from a French novel, to satisfy your vanity.'

De Chauxville's dull eyes suddenly flashed.

'I will trouble you to believe, Madame,' he said, in a low concentrated voice, 'that such a thought never entered my head. A De Chauxville is not a commercial traveller, if you please. No; it may surprise you, but my feeling for you has more good in it than you would seem capable of inspiring. God only knows how it is that a bad woman can inspire a good love.'

Etta looked at him in amazement. She did not always understand De Chauxville. No matter for surprise, perhaps; for he did not always understand himself.

'Then what do you want?' she asked.

'In the meantime, implicit obedience.'

'What are you going to use me for?'

'I have ends,' replied Claude de Chauxville, who had regained his usual half-mocking composure, 'that you will serve. But they will be your ends as well as mine. You will profit by them. I will take very good care that you come to no harm, for you are the ultimate object of all this. At the end of it all I see only—you.'

Etta shrugged her shoulders. It is to be presumed that she was absolutely heartless. Many women are. It is when a heartless woman has brains that one hears of her.

'What if I refuse?' asked Etta, keenly aware of the fact that this man was handicapped by his love for her.

'Then I will force you to obedience.'

Etta raised her delicate eyebrows insolently.

'Ah!'

'Yes,' said De Chauxville, with suppressed anger; 'I will force you to obey me.'

The Princess looked at him with her little mocking smile. She raised one hand to her head with a reflective air as if a hair-pin were of greater importance than his words. She had dressed herself rather carefully for this interview. She never for a moment overlooked the fact that she was a woman, and beautiful. She did not allow him to forget it either.

Her mood of outraged virtue was now suddenly thrown in the background by a phase of open coquetry. Beneath her eyelids she watched for the effect of her pretty, provoking attitude on the man who loved her. She was on her own territory at this work, playing her own game; and she was more alarmed by De Chauxville's imperturbability than by anything he had said.

'You have a strange way of proving the truth of your own statements.'

'What statement?'

She gave a little laugh. Her attitude, her glance, the cunning display of a perfect figure, the laugh, the whole woman was the incarnation of practised coquetry. She did not admit, even to herself, that she was afraid of De Chauxville. But she was playing her best cards, in her best manner. She had never known them fail.

Claude de Chauxville was a little white about the lips. His eyelids flickered, but by an effort he controlled himself, and she did not see the light in his eyes for which she looked.

'If you mean,' he said coldly, 'the statement that I made to you before you were married—namely, that I love you—I am quite content to leave the proof till the future. I know what I am about, Madame.'

He took his watch from his pocket and consulted it.

'I must go in five minutes,' he said. 'I have a few instructions to give you, to which I must beg your careful attention.'

He looked up, meeting Etta's somewhat sullen gaze with a smile of triumph.

'It is essential,' he went on, 'that I be invited to Osterno. I do not want to stay there long; indeed, I do not care to. But I must see the place. I dare say you can compass the invitation, Madame?'

'It will be difficult.'

'And therefore worthy of your endeavour. I have the greatest regard for your diplomatic skill. I leave the matter in your hands, Princess.'

Etta shrugged her shoulders and looked past him out of the window. De Chauxville was considering her face carefully.

'Another point to be remembered,' he went on, 'is your husband's daily life at Osterno. The Prince is not above suspicion; the authorities are watching him. He is suspected of propagating revolutionary ideas among the peasantry. I should like you to find out as much as you can. Perhaps you know already. Perhaps he has told you, Princess. I know that beautiful face! He has told you! Good. Does he take an interest in the peasants?'

Etta did not answer.

'Kindly give me your attention, Madame. Does the Prince take an interest in the peasants?'

'Yes.'

'An active interest?'

'Yes.'

'Have you any details?'

'No,' answered Etta.

'Then you will watch him, and procure those details.'

Etta's face was defiant and pale. De Chauxville never took his eyes from it.

'I have undertaken a few small commissions for an old friend of yours, Monsieur Vassili, whom you obliged once before!' he said; and the defiance faded from her eyes.

'The authorities cannot, in these disturbed times, afford to tolerate princes of an independent turn of mind. Such men are apt to make the peasant think himself more important than he is. I dare say, Madame, that you are already tired of Russia. It might perhaps serve your ends if this country was made a little too hot for your husband, eh? I see your proud lips quivering, Princess! It is well to keep the lips under control. We, who deal in diplomacy, know where to look for such signs. Yes; I dare say I can get you out of Russia—for ever. But you must

be obedient. You must reconcile yourself to the knowledge that you have met—your master.'

He bowed in his graceful way, spreading out his hands in mock humility. Etta did not answer him. For the moment she could see no outlet to this maze of trouble, and yet she was conscious of not fearing De Chauxville so much as she feared Karl Steinmetz.

'A lenient master,' pursued the Frenchman, whose vanity was tickled by the word. 'I do not ask much. One thing is to be invited to Osterno, that I may be near you. The other is a humble request for details of your daily life, that I may think of you when absent.'

Etta drew in her lips, moistening them as if they had suddenly become parched.

De Chauxville glanced at her and moved towards the door. He paused with his fingers on the handle, and looking back over his shoulder he said:

'Have I made myself quite clear?'

Etta was still looking out of the window with hard, angry eyes. She took no notice of the question.

De Chauxville turned the handle.

'Again let me impress upon you the advisability of implicit obedience,' he said, with delicate insolence. 'I mentioned the Charity League; but that is not my strongest claim upon your attention. I have another interesting little detail of your life, which I will reserve until another time.'

He closed the door behind him, leaving Etta white-lipped.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT.

A RUSSIAN forest in winter is one of Nature's places of worship. There are some such places in the world, where Nature seems to stand in the presence of the Deity: a sunrise at sea; night on a snow mountain; mid-day in a Russian forest in winter. These places and these times are good for convalescent atheists and such as pose as unbelievers—the cheapest form of notoriety.

Paul had requested Catrina and Maggie to drive as quietly as possible through the forest. The warning was unnecessary, for

the stillness of snow is infectious, while the beauty of the scene seemed to command silence. As usual, Catrina drove without bells. The one attendant on his perch behind was a fur-clad statue of servitude and silence. Maggie, leaning back, hidden to the eyes in her sables, had nothing to say to her companion. The way lay through forests of pine—trackless, motionless, virgin. The sun filtering through the snow-laden branches cast a subdued golden light upon the ruddy upright trunks of the trees. At times a willow-grouse, white as the snow, light and graceful on the wing, rose from the branch where he had been laughing to his mate with a low cooing laugh, and fluttered away over the trees.

‘A *kooropathká*,’ said Catrina, knowing the life of the forest almost as well as Paul, whose very existence was wrapped up in these things.

Far over the summits of the pines a snipe seemed to be wheeling a sentinel round. He followed them as they sped along, calling out all the while his deep warning note, like that of a lamb crouching beneath a hedge where the wind is not tempered.

Once or twice they heard the dismal howl of a wolf—the most melancholy, the weirdest, the most hopeless of Nature’s calls. The whole forest seemed to be on the alert—astir and in suspense. The wolf, disturbed in his lair, no doubt heard and understood the cry of the watchful snipe and the sudden silence of the willow-grouse, who loves to sit and laugh when all is safe. A clumsy capercailzie, swinging along over the trees with a great flap and rush of wings, seemed to be intent on his own solitary, majestic business—a very king among the fowls of the air.

Amidst the topmost branches of the pines the wind whispered and stirred like a child in sleep; but beneath all was still. Every branch stood motionless beneath its burden of snow. The air was thin, exhilarating, brilliant—like dry champagne. It seemed to send the blood coursing through the veins with a very joy of life.

Catrina noted all these things while cleverly handling her ponies. They spoke to her with a thousand voices. She had roamed in these same forests with Paul, who loved them and understood them as she did.

Maggie, in the midst as it were of a revelation, leant back and wondered at it all. She, too, was thinking of Paul. She understood him better now. This drive had revealed to her a part of his nature which had rather puzzled her—a large, simple, quiet

strength which had developed and grown to maturity beneath these trees. We are all part of what we have seen. We all carry with us through life somewhat of the scenes through which we passed in childhood.

Maggie knew now where Paul had learnt the quiet concentration of mind, the absorption in his own affairs, the complete lack of interest in the business of his neighbour which made him different from other men. He had learnt these things at first hand from God's creatures. These forest dwellers of fur and feather went about their affairs in the same absorbed way, with the same complete faith, the same desire to leave and be left alone. The simplicity of Nature was his. His only craft was forest craft.

'Now you know,' said Catrina when they reached the hut, 'why I hate Petersburg.'

Maggie nodded. The effect of the forest was still upon her. She did not want to talk.

The woman who received them, the wife of a keeper, had prepared in a rough way for their reception. She had a large fire and bowls of warm milk. The doors and windows had been thrown wide open by Paul's orders. He wanted to spare Maggie too intimate an acquaintance with a Russian interior. The hut was really a shooting-box built by Paul some years earlier, and inhabited by a head-keeper, one learned in the ways of bear and wolf and lynx. The large dwelling-room had been carefully scrubbed. There was a smell of pine wood and soap. The table, ready spread with a simple luncheon, took up nearly the whole of the room.

While the two girls were warming themselves, a keeper came to the door of the hut and asked to see Catrina. He stood in the little doorway, completely filling it, and explained that he could not come in as the buckles and straps of his snow-shoes were clogged and frozen. He wore the long Norwegian snow-shoes, and was held to be the quickest runner in the country.

Catrina had a long conversation with the man, who stood hatless, ruddy, and shy.

'It is,' she then explained to Maggie, 'Paul's own man, who always loads for him and carries his spare gun. He has sent him to tell us that the game has been ringed, and that the beaters will close in on a place called the Schapka Clearing, where there is a woodman's refuge. If we care to put on our snow-shoes, this man

will guide us to the clearing and take care of us till the battue is over.'

Of course Maggie welcomed the proposal with delight, and after a hasty luncheon the three glided off through the forest as noiselessly as they had come. After a tiring walk of an hour and more they came to the clearing and were duly concealed in the hut.

No one, the keeper told the ladies, except Paul knew of their presence in the little wooden house. The arrangements of the beat had been slightly altered at the last moment after the hunters had separated. The keeper lighted a small fire and shyly attended to the ladies, removing their snow-shoes with clumsy fingers. He closed the door, and arranged a branch of larch across the window so that they could stand near it without being seen.

They had not been there long before De Chauxville appeared. He moved quickly across the clearing, skimming over the snow with long sweeping strides. Two keepers followed him, and after having shown him the rough hiding-place prepared for him, silently withdrew to their places. Soon Karl Steinmetz came from another direction, and took up his position rather nearer to the hut, in a thicket of pine and dwarf oak. He was only twenty yards away from the refuge where the girls were concealed.

It was not long before Paul came. He was quite alone, and suddenly appeared at the far end of the clearing, in very truth a mighty hunter, standing nearly seven feet on his snow-shoes. One rifle he carried in his hand, another slung across his back. It was like a silent scene on a stage. The snow-white clearing, with long-drawn tracks across it where the snow-shoes had passed, the still trees, the brilliant sun, and the blue depths of the forest behind; while Paul—like the hero of some grim Arctic saga—a huge fur-clad Northern giant, stood alone in the desolation.

From his attitude it was apparent that he was listening. It was probable that the cries of the birds and the distant howl of a wolf told his practised ears how near the beaters were. He presently moved across to where De Chauxville was hidden, spoke some words of advice or warning to him, and pointed with his gloved hand in the direction whence the game might be expected to come.

As a matter of fact Paul was asking De Chauxville the whereabouts of Steinmetz, who had gained his place of con-

cealment unobserved by either. De Chauxville could give him no information, and Paul went away to his post dissatisfied. Karl Steinmetz must have seen them; he must have divined the subject of their conversation; but he remained hidden and gave no sign.

Paul's post was behind a fallen tree, and the watchers in the hut could see him, while he was completely hidden from any animal that might enter the open clearing from the far end. He turned and looked hard at the hut; but the larch branch across the window effectually prevented him from discovering whether anyone was behind it or not.

Thus they all waited in suspense. A blackcock skimmed across the open space and disappeared unmolested. A wolf—grey, gaunt, sneaking and lurching in his gait—trotted into the clearing and stood listening with evil lips drawn back. The two girls watched him breathlessly. When he trotted on unmolested they drew a deep breath as if they had been under water. Paul, with his two rifles laid before him, watched the wolf depart with a smile. The girls could see the smile, and from it learnt somewhat of the man. The keeper beside them gave a little laugh and looked to the hammers of his rifle.

And still there was no sound. It was still, unreal, and like a scene on the stage. The birds skimming over the tops of the trees from time to time threw in as it were, a note of fear and suspense. There was breathlessness in the air. A couple of hares, like white shadows in their spotless winter coats, shot from covert to covert across the open ground.

Then suddenly the keeper gave a little grunt and held up his hand, listening with parted lips and eager eyes. There was a distinct sound of breaking branches and crackling underwood.

They could see Paul cautiously rise from his knees to a crouching attitude. They followed the direction of his gaze, and before them the monarch of these forests stood in clumsy might. A bear had shambling to the edge of the clearing and was standing upright, growling and grumbling to himself, his great paws waving from side to side, his shaggy head thrust forward with a recurring jerk singularly suggestive of a dandy with an uncomfortable collar. These bears of Northern Russia have not the reputation of being very fierce unless they are aroused from their winter quarters, when their wrath knows no bounds and their courage recognises no danger. An angry bear is afraid of no living man or beast.

Moreover, these kings of the Northern forests are huge beasts, capable of smothering a strong man by falling on him and lying there—a death which has come to more than one daring hunter. The beast's favourite method of dealing with his foe is to claw him to death, or else hug him till his ribs are snapped and crushed into his vitals.

The bear stood poking his head and looking about with little, fiery, bloodshot eyes for something to destroy. His rage was manifest, and in his strength he was a grand sight. The majesty of power and a dauntless courage were his.

It was De Chauville's shot, and, while keeping his eye on the bear, Paul glanced impatiently over his shoulder from time to time, wondering why the Frenchman did not fire. The bear was a huge one, and would probably carry three bullets and still be a dangerous adversary.

The keeper muttered impatiently.

They were watching Paul breathlessly. The bear was approaching him. It would not be safe to defer firing another second.

Suddenly the keeper gave a short exclamation of astonishment and threw up his rifle.

There was another bear behind Paul, shambling towards him, unseen by him. All his attention was riveted on the huge brute forty yards in front of him. It was Claude de Chauville's task to protect Paul from any flank or rear attack; and Claude de Chauville was peering over his covert watching with blanched face the second bear, and lifting no hand, making no sign. The bear was within a few yards of Paul, who was crouching behind the fallen pine and now raising his rifle to his shoulder.

In a flash of comprehension the two girls saw all, through the panes of the closed window. It was still singularly like a scene on the stage. The second bear raised his powerful fore-paws as he approached. One blow would tear open Paul's brain.

A terrific report sent the girls staggering back, for a moment paralysing thought. The keeper had fired through the window, both barrels almost simultaneously. It was a question how much lead would bring the bear down before he covered the intervening dozen yards. In the confined space of the hut, the report of the heavy double charge was like that of a cannon; moreover, Steinmetz, twenty yards away, had fired at the same moment.

The room was filled with smoke. The two girls were blinded for an instant. Then they saw the keeper tear open the door and

disappear. The cold air through the shattered casement was a sudden relief to their lungs, choked with sulphur and the fumes of spent powder.

In a flash they were out of the open door; and there again, with the suddenness of a panorama, they saw another picture—Paul kneeling in the middle of the clearing taking careful aim at the retreating form of the first bear. They saw the puff of blue smoke rise from his rifle, they heard the sharp report; and the bear rolled over on its face.

Steinmetz and the keeper were walking towards Paul. Claude de Chauville, standing outside his screen of brushwood, was staring with wide, fear-stricken eyes at the hut which he had thought empty. He did not know that there were three people behind him, watching him. What had they seen? What had they understood?

Catrina and Maggie ran towards Paul. They were on snow-shoes, and made short work of the intervening distance.

Paul had risen to his feet. His face was grave. There was a singular gleam in his eyes, which was not a gleam of mere excitement such as the chase brings into some men's eyes.

Steinmetz looked at him and said nothing. For a moment Paul stood still. He looked round him, noting with experienced glance the lay of the whole incident—the dead form of the bear ten yards behind his late hiding-place, one hundred and eighty yards from the hut, a hundred and sixty yards from the spot whence Karl Steinmetz had sent his unerring bullet through the bear's brain. Paul saw it all. He measured the distances. He looked at De Chauville, standing white-faced at his post, not fifty yards from the carcase of the second bear.

Paul seemed to see no one but De Chauville. He went straight towards him, and the whole party followed in breathless suspense. Steinmetz was nearest to him, watching with his keen, quiet eyes.

Paul went up to De Chauville and took the rifle from his hands. He opened the breech and looked into the barrels. They were clean; the rifle had not been fired off.

He gave a little laugh of contempt, and, throwing the rifle at De Chauville's feet, turned abruptly away.

It was Catrina who spoke.

'If you had killed him,' she said, 'I would have killed you!'

Steinmetz picked up the rifle, closed the breech, and handed it to De Chauville with a queer smile.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A CLOUD.

WHEN the Osterno party reached home that same evening the Starosta was waiting to see Steinmetz. His news was such that Steinmetz sent for Paul, and the three men went together to the little room beyond the smoking-room in the old part of the castle.

'Well?' said Paul, with the unconscious *hauteur* which made him a prince to these people.

The Starosta spread out his hands.

'Your Excellency,' he answered, 'I am afraid.'

'Of what?'

The Starosta shrugged his narrow shoulders in cringing deprecation.

'Excellency, I do not know. There is something in the village—something in the whole country. I know not what it is. It is a feeling—one cannot see it, one cannot define it; but it is there, like the gleam of water at the bottom of a deep well. The moujiks are getting dangerous. They will not speak to me. I am suspected. I am watched.'

His shifty eyes, like black beads, flitted from side to side as he spoke. He was like a weasel at bay. It was the face of a man who went in bodily fear.

'I will go with you down to the village now,' said Paul. 'Is there any excuse—any illness?'

'Ah, Excellency,' replied the chief, 'there is always that excuse.'

Paul looked at the clock.

'I will go now,' he said. He began his simple preparations at once.

'There is dinner to be thought of,' suggested Steinmetz with a resigned smile. 'It is half-past seven.'

'Dinner can wait,' replied Paul in English. 'You might tell the ladies that I have gone out, and will dine alone when I come back.'

Steinmetz shrugged his broad shoulders.

'I think you are a fool,' he said, 'to go alone. If they discover your identity they will tear you to pieces.'

'I am not afraid of them,' replied Paul, with his head in the

medicine cupboard, 'any more than I am afraid of a horse. They are like horses; they do not know their own strength.'

'With this difference,' added Steinmetz, 'that the moujik will one day make the discovery. He is beginning to make it now. The Starosta is quite right, Paul. There is something in the air. It is about time that you took the ladies away from here and left me to manage it alone.'

'That time will never come again,' answered Paul. 'I am not going to leave you alone again.'

He was pushing his arms into the sleeves of the old brown coat reaching to his heels, a garment which commanded as much love and respect in Osterno as ever would an angel's wing.

Steinmetz opened the drawer of his bureau and laid a revolver on the table.

'At all events,' he said, 'you may as well have the where-withal to make a fight of it, if the worst comes to the worst.'

'As you like,' answered Paul, slipping the firearm into his pocket.

The Starosta moved away a pace or two. He was essentially a man of peace.

Half an hour later it became known in the village that the Moscow Doctor was in the house of one Ivan Krass, where he was prepared to see all patients who were not suffering from infectious complaints. The door of this cottage was soon besieged by the sick and the idle, while the Starosta stood in the doorway and kept order.

Within, in the one dwelling-room of the cottage, were assembled as picturesque and as unsavoury a group as the most enthusiastic modern 'slummer' could desire to see.

Paul, standing by the table with two paraffin lamps placed behind him, saw each suppliant in turn, and all the while he kept up a running conversation with the more intelligent, some of whom lingered on to talk and watch.

'Ah, John the son of John,' he would say, 'what is the matter with you? It is not often I see you. I thought you were clean and thrifty.'

To which John the son of John replied that the winter had been hard and fuel scarce, that his wife was dead and his children stricken with influenza.

'But you have had relief; our good friend the Starosta——'

'Does what he can,' grumbled John, 'but he dare not do much.'

The bárins will not let him. The nobles want all the money for themselves. The Emperor is living in his palace, where there are fountains of wine. We pay for that with our taxes. You see my hand—I cannot work; but I must pay the taxes, or else we shall be turned out into the street.'

Paul, while attending to the wounded hand—an old story of an old wound neglected, and a constitution with all the natural healing power drained out of it by hunger and want and vodka—Paul, ever watchful, glanced round and saw sullen, lowering faces, eager eyes, hungry, cruel lips.

'But the winter is over now. You are mistaken about the nobles. They do what they can. The Emperor pays for the relief that you have had all these months. It is foolish to talk as you do.'

'I only tell the truth,' replied the man, wincing as Paul deliberately cut away the dead flesh. 'We know now why it is that we are all so poor.'

'Why?' asked Paul, pouring some lotion over a wad of lint and speaking indifferently.

'Because the nobles——' began the man, and some one nudged him from behind, urging him to silence.

'You need not be afraid of me,' said Paul. 'I tell no tales, and I take no money.'

'Then why do you come?' asked a voice in the background. 'Some one pays you; who is it?'

'Ah, Tula,' said Paul, without looking up. 'You are there, are you? The great Tula. There is a hardworking, sober man, my little fathers, who never beats his wife, and never drinks, and never borrows money. A useful neighbour! What is the matter with you, Tula? You have been too sparing with the vodka, no doubt. I must order you a glass every hour.'

There was a little laugh. But Paul, who knew these people, was quite alive to the difference of feeling towards himself. They still accepted his care, his help, his medicine; but they were beginning to doubt him.

'There is your own Prince,' he went on fearlessly to the man whose hand he was binding up. 'He will help you when there is real distress.'

An ominous silence greeted this observation.

Paul raised his head and looked round. In the dim light of the two smoky lamps he saw a ring of wild faces. Men with

shaggy beards and hair all entangled and unkempt, with fierce eyes and lowering glances; women with faces that unsexed them. There were despair and desperation and utter recklessness in the air, in the attitude, in the hearts of these people. And Paul had worked among them for years. The sight would have been heart-breaking had Paul Howard-Alexis been the sort of man to admit the possibility of a broken heart. All that he had done had been frustrated by the wall of heartless bureaucracy against which he had pitched his single strength. There was no visible progress. These were not the faces of men and women moving up the social scale by the aid of education and the deeper self-respect that follows it. Some of them were young, although they hardly looked it. They were young in years, but old in life and misery. Some of them he knew to be educated. He had paid for the education himself. He had risked his own personal freedom to procure it for them, and misery had killed the seed.

He looked on this stony ground, and his stout heart was torn with pity. It is easy to be patient in social economy when that vague jumble of impossible ideas is calmly discussed across the dinner-table. But the result seems hopelessly distant when the mass of the poor and wretched stand before one in the flesh.

Paul knew that this little room was only a specimen of the whole of Russia. Each of these poor peasants represented a million—equally hopeless, equally powerless to contend with an impossible taxation.

He could not give them money, because the tax-collector had them all under his thumb and would exact the last kopeck. The question was far above his single-handed reach, and he did not dare to meet it openly and seek the assistance of the few fellow-nobles who faced the position without fear.

He could not see in the brutal faces before him one spark of intelligence, one little gleam of independence and self-respect which could be attributed to his endeavour, which the most sanguine construction could take as resulting from his time and money given to a hopeless cause.

Well,' he said. 'Have you nothing to tell me of your Prince?'

'You know him,' answered the man who had spoken from the safe background. 'We need not tell you.'

'Yes,' answered Paul; 'I know him.'

He would not defend himself.

'There,' he went on, addressing the man whose hand was now bandaged. 'You will do. Keep clean and sober, and it will heal. Get drunk and go dirty, and you will die. Do you understand, Ivan Ivanovitch?'

The man grunted sullenly, and moved away to give place to a woman with a baby in her arms.

Paul glanced into her face. He had known her a few years earlier a happy child playing at her mother's cottage door.

She drew back the shawl that covered her child with a faint, far-off gleam of pride in her eyes. There was something horribly pathetic in the whole picture. The child-mother, her rough, unlovely face lighted for a moment with that gleam from Paradise which men never know; the huge man bending over her, and between them the wizened, disease-stricken little waif of humanity.

'When he was born he was a very fine child,' said the mother.

Paul glanced at her. She was quite serious. She was looking at him with a strange pride on her face. Paul nodded and drew aside the shawl. The baby was staring at him with wise, grave eyes, as if it could have told him a thing or two if it had only been gifted with the necessary speech. Paul knew that look. It meant starvation.

'What is it?' asked the child-mother. 'It is only some little illness, is it not?'

'Yes; it is only a little illness.'

He did not add that no great illness is required to kill a small child. He was already writing something in his pocket-book. He tore the leaf out and gave it to her.

'This,' he said, 'is for you—yourself, you understand? Take that each day to the Starosta and he will give you what I have written down. If you do not eat all that he gives you and drink what there is in the bottle as he directs you, the baby will die—you understand? You must give nothing away; nothing even to your husband.'

The next patient was the man whose voice had been heard from the safe retreat of the background. His dominant malady was obvious. A shaky hand, an unsteady eye, and a bloated countenance spoke for themselves. But he had other diseases more or less developed.

'So you have no good to tell of your Prince,' said Paul, looking into the man's face.

'Our Prince, Excellency! He is not our Prince. His forefathers seized this land; that is all.'

'Ah! Who has been telling you that?'

'No one,' grumbled the man. 'We know it; that is all.'

'But you were his father's serfs, before the freedom. Let me see your tongue. Yes; you have been drinking—all the winter. Ah! is not that so, little father; your parents were serfs before the freedom.'

'Freedom!' growled the man. 'A pretty freedom! We were better off before.'

'Yes; but the world interfered with serfdom, because it got its necessary touch of sentiment. There is no sentiment in starvation.'

The man did not understand. He grunted acquiescence nevertheless. The true son of the people is always ready to grunt acquiescence to all that sounds like abuse.

'And what is this Prince like? Have you seen him?' went on Paul.

'No; I have not seen him. If I saw him I would kick his head to pieces.'

'Ah, just open your mouth a little wider. Yes; you have a nasty throat there. You have had diphtheria. So you would kick his head to pieces. Why?'

'He is a *tchinovnik*—a Government spy. He lives on the taxes. But it will not be for long. There is a time coming —'

'Ah! What sort of a time? Now you must take this to the Starosta. He will give you a bottle. It is not to drink. It is to wash your throat with. Remember that, and do not give it to your wife by way of a tonic as you did last time. So there are changes coming, are there?'

'There is a change coming for the Prince—for all the princes,' replied the man in the usual tap-room jargon. 'For the Emperor too. The poor man has had enough of it. God made the world for the poor man as well as for the rich. Riches should be equally divided. They are going to be. The country is going to be governed by a Mir. There will be no taxes. The Mir makes no taxes. It is the *tchinovniks* who make the taxes and live on them.'

'Ah, you are very eloquent, little father. If you talk like this in the *kabák* no wonder you have a bad throat. There, I can do no more for you. You must wash more and drink less. You

might try a little work perhaps ; it stimulates the appetite. And with a throat like that I should not talk so much if I were you. Next.'

The next comer was afflicted with a wound that would not heal—a common trouble in cold countries. While attending to this sickening sore Paul continued his conversation with the last patient.

'You must tell me,' he said, 'when these changes are about to come. I should like to be there to see. It will be interesting.'

The man laughed mysteriously.

'So the government is to be by a Mir, is it ?' went on Paul.

'Yes ; the poor man is to have a say in it.'

'That will be interesting. But at the Mir everyone talks at once and no one listens ; is it not so ?'

The man made no reply.

'Is the change coming soon ?' asked Paul coolly.

But there was no reply. Some one had seized the loquacious orator of the kabák, and he was at that moment being quietly hustled out of the room.

After this there was a sullen silence, which Paul could not charm away, charm he never so wisely.

When his patients had at last ebbed away he lighted a cigarette and walked thoughtfully back to the castle. There was danger in the air, and this was one of those men upon whom danger acts as a pleasant stimulant.

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*CLEG KELLY, ARAB OF THE CITY:
HIS PROGRESS AND ADVENTURES.*¹

BY S. R. CROCKETT,

AUTHOR OF 'THE STICKIT MINISTER,' 'THE RAIDERS,' ETC.

ADVENTURE XX.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF ADONIS BETWIXT TWO VENUSES.

BUT we must do our hero justice. After the spiriting away of Vara Kavannah and the children from the burning house in Callendar's yard, Cleg did not submit to their loss without making many attempts to find them. His friend, the sergeant's wife, set the machinery of the police in motion. But nothing could be heard of Maggie or of Hugh, or of little Gavin. Cleg went the round of the men who drive the rubbish-carts, each man of whom was a personal and particular friend. Now a persevering ash-man knows a lot—more than a policeman, having a wider beat, and not so much encouragement officially to tell what he knows. But, as Cleg could tell you, an ash-man's temper needs watching. Like the articles of diet he empties out of the baskets into his great sheet-iron covered carts, it is apt to go both bad and high. A policeman patrolling his beat is, according to his personal deservings, stayed with flagons, comforted with apples. But what maid in all the areas thinks upon the poor dustman?

Nevertheless, Cleg went the round of the ash-cart men, and of each he inquired circumspectly about the Kavannahs. Not one had seen them in any part of the city. But, indeed, there were many people, even women and children, awake and abroad that

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morning of the great fire in Callendar's woodyard. Cleg next looked up the morning milkmen who converge upon the city from every point, summer and winter. They have risen to the milking of the cows during the small hours of the morning, and thereafter they have set their barrels upon a light cart, before spinning cityward between the hedges. The milkmen can tell as much of the country roads as the dustmen of the city streets. But to none had the vision of three pilgrim children, setting forth from the city of persecution, been vouchsafed.

So Cleg had perforce to abide, with his heart unsatisfied and sore. Perhaps, so he thought, one day hidden things would come to light, and the shadows which had settled upon the fate of the Kavannahs break and flee away.

In the meantime the ancient Society of the Knuckle Dusters flourished exceedingly in its new incarnation of 'The Club.' The deputation which approached Mr. Donald Iverach, having by the intervention of the watchman chosen a good time for their visit, was most graciously received. The watchman, a man of some penetration, gave Cleg the word to come at six o'clock on a day when the junior partner had brought his tennis shoes to the works.

'You want to use the old store-room every night?' said Donald Iverach, looking at the shamefaced deputation, every man of whom itched to draw triangles on the floor with his toe and yet dared not.

'Except Sundays,' answered Cleg, who, as ever, was ready of speech, and not at all shamefaced.

'What does Miss Tennant say?' asked the Junior Partner, who wished to see where he was being led. He was not a selfish young man, but, like the rest of us, he wanted to be sure what he was going to get out of a thing before he committed himself.

'Miss Tennant's a memb——' began Tam Luke, who had no discretion.

Cleg kicked Tam Luke on the shin, severely. Tam promptly coughed, choked, and was led out by unsympathetic friends, who expressed their opinion of him outside with pith and animation.

'Miss Celie wants us to look after this club oorsels,' said Cleg. 'We are the commy-tee—except Tam Luke,' he added. Tam had *de facto* forfeited his position by his interruption.

The commy-tee hung its head, and looked about for possible exits.

'And who is responsible?' asked Mr. Donald Iverach, smiling a little and shaking his head.

'Me an' Miss Celie,' answered Cleg, promptly.

The Junior Partner stopped shaking his head, but continued to smile.

'Come away, chaps,' said Cleg, who knew when the battle was won; 'guid nicht to ye, sir, an' thank ye. Miss Celie *will* be pleased!'

Thereafter the Knuckle Dusters' Club was formally organised. The prominent feature in the management was the House Committee. Its powers were unlimited, and were chiefly directed to 'chucking out.' This was the club's sole punishment. Fines would certainly not be collected. Privileges were so few that it was not easy to discriminate those which pertained to members of the club in good standing. But the members of the House Committee were chosen on the principle that any two of them, being 'in charge,' should be qualified to 'chuck' the rest of the club—members of the House Committee itself being of course excepted. It was a singularly able-bodied committee, and willing beyond all belief. So long as it held together, the situation was saved. Its average measurement round the forearm was eleven inches.

There were difficulties, of course. And, strange as it may seem, these arose chiefly from the ravages of the tender sentiment of love. The Knuckle Dusters had laid it down as a fundamental condition that no girls were to be permitted, or even encouraged. Miss Celie had insisted upon, this. Perhaps, woman-like, she wished to reign alone, and could brook no rivals near her throne. But in practice the rule was found difficult of enforcement. For there was no maidenly backwardness about the girls of the Sooth Back. It was indeed a rule that each Keelie, beyond the condition of a schoolboy, should possess himself of a sweetheart—that is, so soon as he was capable of 'doing for himself.' Sometimes these alliances resulted in singularly early marriage. Oftener they did not.

Cleg, of course, was much too young for 'nonsense' of this kind, as he described it. But Cleaver's boy, and Tam Luke, and indeed, most of the Knuckle Dusters, being 'in places,' were from the first equipped with a complete working outfit of sweethearts, pipes, and navy revolvers. They got them all about the same time, not because they wanted them, but because it was the fashion. Yet I do them no more than justice when I allow that they

thought most highly of the pipes. They treated their pipes with every consideration.

It is true that each Knuckle Duster spoke of his sweetheart as 'my young lady,' but this was only between themselves. To the 'young ladies' themselves their words were certainly not the ordinary and hackneyed terms of affection, such as generations of common lovers have used.

But the girls were not to be daunted. With such cavalier and disdainful knights, ordinary methods were put out of court. It was clearly necessary that someone should do the wooing. If not the Knuckle Dusters (haughty knaves), why then the 'young lady' herself. It was always Leap Year in the Sooth Back. There were but two unforgivable crimes in the bright lexicon of love, as it was consulted in the lower parts of the Pleasance. On the side of the Knuckle Dusters the one unpardonable fault was 'going with a swell.' On the part of the 'young ladies' it was 'taking up with another girl.' Blows, disdain, contumely, abuse, all fell alike harmless—mere love-pats of the gentle god. 'Another' is the only fatal word in love.

So then, it was quite in keeping with the nature of things, and especially with the nature of untrammelled youth, that the Knuckle Dusters' Club should have its amatorious difficulties. Part of each evening at the club was now devoted to the sciences. Arithmetic and writing were the favourites. There was also talk of forming a shorthand class. For shorthand has a mysterious fascination for the uneducated. It is universal matter of faith among them, that only the most gifted of the human race can learn to write shorthand. This is strange enough, for both observation and experience teach us that the difficulty lies in reading the shorthand after it is written.

The entrance to the club-room of the Knuckle Dusters was through a vaulted 'pend,' which, having no magistrate of the city resident within it, was wholly unlighted. It was no uncommon thing, therefore, for the solemn work of scientific instruction to be interrupted by the voice of the siren outside—a siren with a towse of hair done up loosely in a net, a shawl about her head, and elf locks a-tangle over her brow. The siren did not sing. She whistled like a locomotive engine when the signals are contrary and the engine-driver anxious to go off duty. At first the Knuckle Dusters used to rise and quietly depart, when, in this well-understood fashion, the voice of love shrilly breathed up the store-room stair.

But after a little, Celie, who, from an entirely superfluous sense of delicacy, had hitherto suffered in silence, felt that it was time to remonstrate.

It was Cleaver's boy who caused most trouble. Now this was by no means the fault of Cleaver's boy, who, to do him justice, was far more interested in the adventures of 'Sixteen String Jack' or 'Deadshot Dick, the Cowboy of Coon County,' than in a dozen Susies or Sallies. But Cleaver's boy was a youth of inches. Besides, he had a curly head and an imperious way with him, which took with women—who, gentle and simple, like to be slighted and trodden upon when the right man takes the contract in hand. Cleaver's boy was, in fact, just Lord Byron without the title and the clubfoot. Cleaver's boy had also genius like the poet. Here is one of his impromptus, written after a music-hall model:

I met my Sal a-walkin' out, a-walkin' on the street,

I says to Sal, 'Why do you walk upon them clumps of feet?'

Says Sal to me, 'None of your lip. I've got another chap!'

So I hits Sal a slap, and I sends her back

To her ain countrie.

Cleaver's boy could do any amount of this kind of thing. He modelled himself upon the popular broad-sheet of the day. But it was not popular in the Sooth Back. The article in demand there was a song about a little child who softly faded away after bidding farewell—a long farewell, to all his friends so dear—in a verse apiece. Like King Charles, this boy was quite an unconscionable time a-dying. But he did not know it. He was a popular boy in the Sooth Back, and Tam Luke warbled about him till the assembled Knuckle Dusters snivelled secretly, and looked hard down between their knees so as to pretend they were spitting on the floor. But Cleaver's boy, who in early youth had come from Blackburn with his father, the slaughterman, said it was 'Bully-rot!' He swore that he could make a song about Sal Mackay that would be worth a shopful of such 'tripe.' The verse quoted above is part of the song he made. Cleaver's boy has repeated the whole poem to me more than once, but the above is all that I can bring myself to print. For Sal Mackay has able-bodied relatives, and, besides, there is a law of libel in this country, which is provided for in my agreement with my publishers.

Sal Mackay and Susy Murphy were rivals in the affections of the handsome 'boy' of Cleaver the butcher. But for long the swain was coy and gave no final evidence of preference. So that day by

day in the factory where they worked side by side, neither could exult over the other.

'Ye needna think he cares a buckie for you, ye tow-headed crawlin' ferlie!' said Sue, who was of the dark allure, to Sal who was fair.

'He wadna look the road ye are on, ye ill-grown, cankered-faced, jaundice hospital!' was the retort elegant of Sal Mackay.

So it happened nightly that when Celie Tennant was at the most impressive portions of the Scripture lesson, or engaged in elucidating the mysteries of compound division (and pardonably getting a little tangled among the farthings), that there would come a long whistle at the door, and then a smart rapping at the window. Another blast like a steamer signal was blown before the dark tower, the Knuckle Dusters would throw their heads back to laugh, and then look at Cleaver's boy. He would stand it a little while, and then, to escape from their meaning looks, he would throw down his slate and books and go quietly out at the door.

At last Celie plucked up courage to speak to him.

'It is not so much that I mind,' said Celie, for she had been learning many things since she came down to the Sooth Back, things that she did not mention when she went home to Aurelia Villa, or even repeat to the Junior Partner.

'It is not that I mind so much myself,' she said, 'but it is a very bad example for Cleg and the younger boys.'

'I ken, I ken, but faith, I canna help it, Miss Celie,' said Cleaver's boy, in desperation. 'As sure as daith, it is no my faut. Thae twa lasses will juist no let me alane. I canna gang along the street for them.'

And Celie, blushing for her sex, believed him and condoled. For, next to Cleg, she had a weakness for Cleaver's boy. He was so good-looking.

'Wait till they come the nicht!' said Cleaver's boy, darkly.

It was the hour of the vesper writing lesson. Cleaver's boy was seated at the long desk which Mr. Donald Iverach had found, as he said, 'about the premises'—but for which he had, curiously enough, previously paid out of his own pocket. Cleaver's boy had his head close down to the paper. His elbows were spread-eagled over the table. His shoulders were squared with determination, and his whole pose gave token of the most complete absorption and studious intentness. He was writing the line, 'Kindness to dumb animals is a sign of nobility of character.'

As his pen traced the curves, his tongue was elaborating the capitals, so exactly that you could almost tell by watching the tip whether Cleaver's boy was writing a K or an N. This kind of expressive caligraphy has not been sufficiently studied. But Cleaver's boy was undoubtedly a master of it.

There came angry voices at the door.

'What are ye doin' here? I tell ye he's my chap!' said a voice sharp and shrill.

'It's a black lee. I tell ye he's naething o' the kind!' said another, yet louder and rougher.

Sue Murphy and Sal Mackay were at it again. So said the Society of the Knuckle Dusters as it winked amicably and collectively to itself. Celie Tennant was just looking over the copy-book of Cleaver's boy. As she stood behind him, she could see the scarlet swiftly rising to his neck and brow. Adonis was becoming distinctly annoyed. It was going to be a rough night for Venuses.

'I tell ye it was only on Saturday nicht that he knocked my bonnet off my head an' kickit it along the street—an' ye will hae the impudence to say after *that* that he is your lad!'

It was the voice of Sue Murphy which made this proud declaration.

'That nocht ava', ye Irish besom,' retorted Sal Mackay; 'yestreen nae farther gane, he pu'ed a handfu' o' the hair oot o' my heid. Aye, and rubbit my face wi' a clabber o' glaur, forbye!'

It was the last straw. Cleaver's boy rose to his feet with a look of stern and righteous determination on his face. The assembled Knuckle Dusters watched him eagerly. Celie stood aghast, fearing that murder might be done, in the obvious endeavour Cleaver's boy was now about to make, to excel all his previous records in the art of love-making, as practised in the Sooth Back and the Tinklers' Lands.

He walked slowly to the corner of the store room, where on a little bench stood two very large water cans of tin, painted a dark blue. They were the property of the club and contained the drinking water for the evening. They had just been filled.

Cleaver's boy took one in his hand and opened the door. Then he swung the heavy can, and tilting it up with the other hand, he arched the contents solidly and impartially upon the waiting Juliets. Returning, he seized the other, and from the shrieking down the passage it was obvious to Celie, that he had been equally successful in cooling the ardour of the rivals with that.

Cleaver's boy came back with the empty cans in his hand, panting a little as with honest toil, but there was no shamefacedness in his eyes now. He looked straight at Celie like a man who has done his full duty, and perhaps a little over.

'I pit it to yoursel', Miss Celie, can a man do mair than that?'

And with no further word, Cleaver's boy dusted the drops from the knees of his breeches, and sat down to write six more lines of 'Kindness to dumb animals is a sign of nobility of character.'

But next night he came to Celie in the blackness of despair.

'I will hae to resign, after all, Miss Celie,' he said, 'I canna bide here to be a disgrace to ye a'.'

'Why, what's the matter, James?' said Miss Tennant, who did not yet know everything; 'are the girls going to prosecute you in the police-court for throwing the water over them last night?'

Cleaver's boy opened his mouth in astonishment and kept it so for some time.

'Prosecute me?—I wish to peace they wad!' cried he, after he got his breath. 'Na, faith, Miss Celie; will ye believe me, they are fonder o' me than ever. They were baith waitin' for me at the stairfit this mornin' when I cam doon to gang to the shop.'

And Miss Celie again believed him.

ADVENTURE XXI.

AN IDYLL OF BOGIE ROLL.

PERHAPS it was in sheer desperation that Cleaver's boy (whose name, by the way, was James Annan, though the fact was hardly ever mentioned except in the police court) at last resolved to make a desperate cast.

'They canna baith hae me,' he said, 'an' Guid kens I want neither o' them. But gin I had yin o' them, she wad maybe keep the ither off.'

So Cleaver's boy scratched his head to find out a way of settling the difficulty. He could, he thought, be indifferently happy with either. It was only having both of them 'tearing at his coat-tails' that made him miserable.

At last he dashed his hand against his thigh with a cry of joy, and fell to dancing a hobnailed fandango in the gutter.

'Dod, man, the verra thing,' he said; 'I'll toss for them!'

So with that Cleaver's boy took out his lucky penny, and,

selecting a smooth space of the unpaved roadway of a new street, where the coin would neither stick edgeways nor yet bounce unfairly on the stones, he spun the coin deftly upwards from his level thumb-nail.

'Heads Sal—tails Susy!' he said, very solemnly, for his life was in the twirl of the penny.

'Heads she is—Sal has got me!' exclaimed the ardent lover.

They were engaged that night. The next day they were photographed together—Sal with a very large hat, a great deal of hair, and a still larger amount of feather; Cleaver's boy with a very small hat, an immense check suit, and a pipe stuck at a knowing angle with the bowl turned down. That same night Sal had still a lover, indeed, but the glory of her betrothal attire was no more. Her hat was a mere trampled ruin. Her fringe was patchy. She had a black eye; and all that remained of Susy Murphy was in the lock-up for assault and battery. Without doubt it was a stirring time for James Annan, and it is to be feared that Mr. Cleaver and his customers did not get quite their fair share of his attention while it lasted.

Susy Murphy got off under the First Offenders Act. But immediately upon re-encountering her successful rival she incontinently became a second offender, and was as summarily fined thirty shillings or seven days. And it added to the bitterness of Cleaver's boy, that he had to come good for both the hat ruined in the first battle and the dress torn to shreds in the second.

Then it also became his duty to take out Miss Mackay every evening, and so frequent were the demands upon his purse, that Cleaver's boy perceived that nothing but marriage stood between him and financial ruin.

'If I was only marriet,' he soliloquised, 'I could stop the lemonades and ice-creams. They're juist terrible expensive. I declare Sal thinks naething o' a dozen bottles. And gin ye stickit a preen until her ony gate, I declare she wad fizz.'

It occurred to him, however, that as a temporary alternative it might be possible to increase his earnings. And Cleaver's boy was not above asking for what he wanted.

'Guid jobs wants finding nooadays!' was a favourite expression of his.

Now there was a certain Bailie Holden among the customers of Mr. Cleaver. This dignitary had succeeded to the responsible position of Convener of the Cleaning and Lighting department—

a division of the city's municipal business which has always been associated with excellent eating and drinking, and a good deal of both.

Bailie Holden had the finest taste in the light wines of his country of any man on the council. In his happier moments of inspiration he could tell the age of Long John to within a year. Now Bailie Holden had, among other excellent domestic properties, a kitchen-maid who was not above casting soft eyes at spruce James Allan of Cleaver's, so *débonnaire*, with his blue apron and his basket over his arm. And James had cultivated the acquaintance according to his opportunity, without, of course, thinking it necessary to say anything to Sal Mackay—or, for the matter of that, to Sue Murphy either. So that, in the course of conversation at the area door, it fell out that Cleaver's boy mentioned his desire to be no more Cleaver's boy, but a servant of the city corporation in the department of Cleaning and Lighting. And the kitchen-maid answered, keeping her eyes on James and adjusting her tumbled cap at the same time—

'I'll speak to the maister when he comes through the back kitchen, to smoke his pipe in the yaird after dinnertime.'

For it was the use and wont of Bailie Holden, when he was without company, or could shunt the entertainment of it upon his wife, to put on a seedy garden coat and slip off quietly round by the greenhouses. Here he took from the edge of a heating tube a short clay pipe of excessive blackness; then from a canister he extracted a snaky twist of Bogie roll. Bailie Holden was renowned for keeping the best cigars in the city, and he also smoked them regularly indoors. His wife, indeed, did not allow anything else. But he came outside for his real smoke, in his shirt-sleeves in the warm evenings, and in his garden coat when it was colder. For though to all men he was now Havanna of the most exclusive brand, and all his appointments like unto that dignity, yet at the heart of him he was still kindly Bogie roll.

The Bailie thought on many things out there in the dark as he nuzzled down the glowing ash in the pipe-bowl close under his nose. He thought, for instance, of the year Elizabeth and he were married, when they started at the foot of Morrison Street in one room at the back of the gasfitter's shop. They did not keep a servant then, and Elizabeth had not yet learned to object to the smoking of Bogie roll. Indeed, her father and her three brothers (all honest masons) incessantly smoked nothing else. But when

there was need to find a place in the little back-room for another person with no experience in Bogie roll where he came from, then the Bailie had gone out every night to the backyard, sat down on a roll of lead piping and smoked a black pipe, with a babe's little complainings tugging at his heart all the while. And the memory of the Bogie roll outside the window, across which the black shadows went and came, had somehow kept his heart warm all through the years.

And, strange it is to say it, but though he was in many ways a difficult man to serve, yet many a servant had remained another term, simply because the master slipped out to take his smoke away from every one in the evening. This is the whole idyll of the life of Bailie Holden, Convener of the Committee on Cleaning and Lighting and proximate Lord Provost of the city. It is curious that it should be an idyll of Bogie roll.

ADVENTURE XXII.

THE SEDUCTION OF A BAILIE.

So it was at this most favourable of times that Cleaver's boy's kitchen-maid approached her master with her request. It was just at the critical moment when the Bailie was laying aside the Convener and host, and donning the Morrison Street plumber, with the garden coat which carried so strong an atmosphere of the idyllic Bogie roll.

'If ye please, sir, there's a young man——,' the voice of the kitchen-maid broke upon his dreams.

'Ah, Janet,' said the Convener, getting helped into the garden coat, for he was not now so slim as once he had been, 'there always is a young man! And that's how the world goes on!'

'But,' said Janet, the kitchen-maid, 'this is a very nice young man. You may have seen him, sir. He comes here twice every day from Mr. Cleaver's, the butcher's, sir.'

'No, Janet,' replied the Bailie, amicably, 'I do not know that I have observed him. You see my duties do not compel me to be cleaning the kitchen steps when nice young men come from Cleaver's!'

'Sir,' said Janet, with a little privileged indignation, 'James Annan, sir, is a most respectable young man.'

'And he asked you to speak to me?'

'Oh no, sir! Indeed, no, sir! But I thought, sir, that in your department you might have need of a steady young man.'

'I have, indeed, Janet. You are as right as ever you will be in your life,' said the Convener of Cleaning and Lighting, thinking of the ravages which the traditional hospitality of the department sometimes made among his steadiest young men.

'What are his desires, Janet?' said the Bailie; 'does he want a chief inspectorship, or will he be content to handle a broom?'

'Oh, not an inspectorship—at first, sir. And he can handle anything, indeed, sir,' said Janet, breathlessly, for the Convener had endued himself with his coat and showed signs of moving gardenwards.

'Including your chin, my dear,' said the Bailie, touching (it is very regrettable to have to state) one of Janet's plump dimples with the action which used fifty years ago to go by the name of 'chucking.' He had dined, his wife was safely upstairs out of harm's way, and Bogie roll glowed cloudily before him. Let these be his excuses.

'James Annan, nor no one else, has more to do with my chin than I like to let them, sir,' said Janet, who came from Inverness, and had a very clear idea of business.

The Bailie laughed and went out.

'I will bear it in mind, Janet,' said he, for he felt that he was wasting time. He did not mean Janet's dimpled chin.

'Better put it down in your notebook—I'll fetch it, sir!' And Janet promptly fetched a black leather case, round-shouldered with importance and bulgy with business.

So the Bailie stood in the half-light which came from the kitchen window, and wetted the stub of a lead-pencil, which Janet had carried for years in the pocket of her working-dresses without ever needing it. He hesitated what to write.

'The young man's name, sir, is James Annan, and you can send the letter in care of me, sir,' said Janet, with a subtle suggestiveness. She tiptoed round till she touched his sleeve, so as to look over at what he was writing.

'Thank you, Janet; anything else?' asked the Bailie.

'No, sir,' said Janet, hesitating with her finger at her lip, 'unless, sir, you could think to put him on this district.'

So it happened that in due time Mr. Cleaver lost the services of Cleaver's boy. These valuable assets were simultaneously gained by the city corporation in the department of Cleaning and Lighting. This has been the immemorial method in which subordinate

positions have been filled, according to the best traditions of the municipal service. The great thing is, of course, to catch your convener, as it were, between dinner and Bogie roll.

James Annan was placed on the southern district, and his duty was to mark in a notebook, less important but a good deal cleaner than the Bailie's, the names of the streets which were attended to in their order, and also the exact moment when each final ash-basket was heaped upon the cart.

What precise benefit trim Janet of Inverness got from the arrangement is not clear. For, being occupied during the night, Cleaver's boy could no more come for the orders early in the morning, nor yet trot whistling down the area steps an hour later with the laden basket upon his arm. So that Janet, supposing the matter interested her at all, seemed definitely to be the loser.

Yet one never knows. For the ways of girls from Inverness are deep as the sea is deep in the unplumbed places in the middle, which are painted the deepest indigo on the atlases. James Annan continued to be called Cleaver's boy, in spite of the fact that a successor at six shillings a week had been appointed, who now wore Cleaver's boy's discarded blue aprons. In other ways he would have been glad to succeed to the perquisites of Cleaver's boy. But he was a sallow-faced youth with straight hair, who used his tobacco without the aid of a pipe. So Janet did not deign to bandy a single word with the new boy. He was no more than a penny-in-the-slot machine, wound up to deliver so many pounds of steak every day. The kitchen steps were now always cleaned in the early dawn, and Janet went about in her old wrapper all the morning and most of the afternoon.

She had taken a saving turn, she said, as if it had been the measles. It was all very well for the table-maid always to wear a black frock.

But though she saw less of Cleaver's boy (the original and only genuine article), it is possible, and indeed likely, that Janet of Inverness knew more of the romance of Susy and Sal than Cleaver's boy gave her credit for. Let those who try to run three or four love affairs abreast, like horses in a circus ring, take warning. Janet of Inverness had never heard of either Sal or Susy from the lips of Cleaver's boy. Nevertheless, there was not much of importance to her schemes which was not familiar to the wise little head set upon the plumply demure shoulders of Janet of Inverness.

ADVENTURE XXIII.

THE AMOROUS ADVENTURES OF A NIGHT-SHIFT MAN.

AN interview which Cleaver's boy had to endure may throw some light upon this. By some strange law of contrary, the undisputed possession of James Annan's affections damped Sal's ardour. She became flighty and difficult in her moods. Cleaver's boy could not take her to enough places of resort, or at least, not to the right ones. So long as he slighted her and rubbed her face with snow as a regular method of courtship, she could not love him enough. But now, when she was formally engaged to him and the alliance had been acknowledged by Providence and Miss Cecilia Tennant, Sal suddenly found that she did not care so much about Cleaver's boy after all. This happened in the second week of the new situation in the department of Cleaning and Lighting.

Sal came home from the mill at six. James went on duty at eight. Consequently it was now usually about seven when James called. It was an unhappy and ill-chosen time, as anybody but a man would have known. For Sal appeared to be in some undress, and was indeed engaged in frizzling her front hair with a pair of hot knitting needles, occasionally burning her fingers and her forehead in the process.

'Hoo are ye the nicht, Sal?' said James, standing at the cheek of the door and crossing his legs comfortably. Someone (he forgot who) had told him he looked well that way.

'Naething the better for seein' you!' retorted Sal over her shoulder. She never took her eyes off the fragment of mirror which was secured to the wall by two long nails and the broken end of another knitting needle.

'Wy Sal, what's wrang wi' ye?' began Cleaver's boy, anxiously. For though in the affairs of men, as between boy and boy, his voice was most for open war, yet in the things of love he liked peace and sacrificed much to secure it.

Sal humped up the shoulder next him and turned sharply away from him with a gesture indicative of the greatest disdain—without, however, taking her eyes from the faint blue smoke which went up from the left side of her fringe, to which she had at that moment applied a fresh pair of red-hot knitting needles.

'Tell me what's the maitter wi' ye, Sal,' said James humbly. For the spirit seemed to have departed out of him.

Sal tossed her head and made a sound which, though inarticulate, indicated that much might be said upon that subject. She could an she would.

Slowly Cleaver's boy extracted from his pocket a neat parcel done up in paper.

'Hae, Sal!' he said, going forward to her elbow and offering them to her; 'hae, here are some sweeties I fetched ye.'

They were her favourite brandy-balls, and on a suitable day, with a light wind and strong sun, their perfume carried a quarter of a mile. James had never known them fail of their effect before. But now, with a swift half-turn, Sal snatched them out of his hand and flung them behind the fire. Cleaver's boy stood aghast. They had cost him fourpence-halfpenny at Tam Luke's shop, and would have cost twice as much but for Tam's good offices in the weighing department.

'What's wrang wi' the brandy-balls, Sal?' he cried in despair. The like of this had never happened before in his experience. Thus Time works out its revenges.

'Did ye get them oot o' an ash-bucket?'* at last cried Sal, breaking her indignant silence.

'No,' said innocent James, 'I got them at Tam Luke's for fourpence-halfpenny.'

'So ye say!' returned Sal, who was determined not to be appeased.

The brandy-balls were now flaming up the chimney, and fast dissolving into their elements with a sickly smell and a fizzling noise.

'Tell us what ye hae against us, Sal; oot wi' it!' said Cleaver's boy, who recognised the great truth that with a woman it is always better to be at the bottom of what she knows, and that at once.

'I'm no gaun to keep company wi' ony man that gangs on the nicht shift!' cried Sal, turning with the needles in her hand and stamping her foot. 'I'll let ye ken that Sal Mackay thinks mair o' hersel' than that. I hae some pride!'

The murder was out. But poor James, who thought that he had done a fine thing in attaining promotion, knew not what to reply.

'And what differ does that make, Sal?' asked Cleaver's boy in astonishment.

'What differ does it make? Hear to the cuddy. Differ—juist

* The local technical term. It seems to have resulted from an attempt to say 'bucket' and 'basket' at the same time.

this differ, that ye'll walk oot wi' some dafter lass than Sal Mackay. I hae mair respect for mysel' than to bemean mysel' to gang wi' a nicht-shift man !'

'But,' said James, 'I get far better pay. Think o' that, Sal !'

'I'm no carin' for that, when I canna be there when ye spend it,' said the mercenary Sal, with, however, commendable straightforwardness.

'But I fetched ye the brandy-balls, Sal,' persisted the once proud boy of Cleaver's.

'Brandy-balls! *That* for your brandy-balls!' cried Sal, pointing to the fireplace, in which a little blue flame was still burning, at the spot where the Tam Luke's sweetmeats had been so irregularly consumed. 'D'ye think that Sal Mackay is to be dependent every nicht on a chap that has to gang on duty at half-past seven?—'

'Eight o'clock!' said Cleaver's boy, eagerly.

'At half-past seven,' said Sal, jerking her head pugnaciously at each syllable, 'he pits on claes that are a disgrace to be seen forbye smelled. And what's to come o' the lemonades noo, I wad like to ken—or o' the gallery at the theaytre?'

'There's Saturday afternoon, Sal,' said James placably, with a sudden access of cheerfulness. He had scored a point.

'Aye, there's Saturday afternune,' replied Sal, with chilling cynicism, 'and what will ye do with your Saturday afternoon? Ye'll maybe tak' me ower to Aberdour again in the boat, and be sae dazed and sleepy-like that ye'll faa asleep on the road, as ye did the last time. And hae everybody sayin', "My word, Sal, but ye hae a blythe young chap there. Ye maun hae been fine heartsome company to him?" D'ye think ony lass that thinks ony-thing o' hersel' wad stand the like o' that?'

Sal stamped her foot and paused for a reply. It was certainly an awkward question. Sal, like most women (thought James) was a demon at 'casting-up' when she began.

Cleaver's boy scratched his curly head and advanced towards Sal. He felt that in the war of words he was going to have very distinctly the worst of it. But he thought that he might fare better nearer at hand. It was one of his favourite axioms that 'it is aye best to argue wi' the weemen at close grips.' *Which, whether it be true or not, at least shows that Cleaver's boy was a youth of some experience—but Sal Mackay chose to misinterpret his action.

'She turned instantly, and, snatching up an iron goblet of hot water which stood on the hearth, she advanced to meet him, crying, 'I'll gi'e ye your fill o' throwin' water on decent folk. An' this water will keep ye fine and warm on the nicht shift, my lad!'

At this Cleaver's boy turned and fled. But as he scudded down the stairs, bent nearly double, the boiling water from Sal Mackay's pan fell in stinging drops upon the back of his neck, and, what was worse, upon his suit of new clothes, bought with his week's wages and donned for the first time.

When Cleaver's boy reached the pavement, he dusted the water splashes off as well as he could, and walked thoughtfully and determinedly across Nicholson Street.

'It'll be an awesome savin' in lemonade,' he said, 'an' that dreadfu' expensive bottle lemonade too!'

A tramcar was passing. A wild thought ran through his brain.

'Dod,' he said, 'I declare I'll save that muckle by giein' up Sal—I'll risk it.'

And he hailed the car and walked very slowly towards it when it stopped. The conductor waved to him to come on.

'Could ye no hae run, man, an' no wasted a' this time?' he said, when Cleaver's boy had at last got himself upon the platform.

'I was gettin' my twopence-worth,' said James Annan, with dignity; 'I am an inside passenger!' And he went through the glass door and sat beside Bailie Holden, who was going home to dinner and was already thinking of Bogie roll.

The Bailie and Cleaver's boy got out at the same place. They made their way to the same house. The Bailie let himself in by the front door. Cleaver's boy went equally unannounced to the back. But Cleaver's boy knew that he had pretty Janet of Inverness waiting for him, whereas the Bailie only had his wife. And in these circumstances most people would have preferred to enter by the back door with James Annan.

Janet of Inverness was standing by the kitchen-window polishing a brass preserving pan in which she could admire her dimpled chin, and the hair which, curling naturally, did not need the intervention of red-hot knitting needles to be beautiful.

Janet ran hastily to the door.

'Do ye want to see the maister?'

'No,' said James Annan; 'wull ye hae me, Janet?'

Janet of Inverness looked him a moment in the eyes. What she read there, Janet only knows. At any rate it seemed to be

satisfactory enough, for, with all the ardour of love's young dream, she fell on his neck, and murmured, 'Aye, Jamie, when—' (here Janet of Inverness sobbed)—'when ye get a rise!'

ADVENTURE XXIV.

THE CROOK IN THE LOT OF CLEAVER'S BOY.

I SHOULD have mentioned before that Inverness Janet's other name was Urquhart, but for the fact that second names do not seem to matter anywhere, except in those grades of society where persons require calling cards to remind them of each others' names.

It was only a natural precisian like Mr. Cleg Kelly who always insisted on the second name. But Cleg had a reason for that. He was himself in the curious position of having no ascertained first name. There was a tradition in the family that he had been baptized Bryan, but his mother had never used the name. And since his father and everyone else had always called him Cleg, Cleg Kelly he remained all his life—or at least, as they say commercially, 'to date.'

But it is with Inverness Janet and the faithless and easily consoled James Annan, late assistant to Mr. Cleaver, butcher, that we have presently to do. Janet's conditional acceptance of his devotion seemed in a fair way to being made absolute. For Cleaver's boy proved a success at the night work. But in spite of this, and of his apparently assured success, both in the fields of practical sanitation and in those of love, James Annan was clearly not happy.

Judging by some past experience of his own, Cleg thought he must be pining for his old freedom.

'What for do ye no rin away, if ye want to be rid o' Janet?' was Cleg's contribution to the problem.

'Haud your tongue! I dinna want to get rid o' Janet!' said Cleaver's boy, loyally, but without indignation. Such things had been, and might be again.

'It's aboot Janet onyway,' said wise Cleg, shaking his head; 'hae Sal or Susy been botherin' her?'

'Na,' said Janet's lover, 'they ken better. My certes, Janet wad gie them the door in their faces and then send for a polisssman.'

'Ye had better tell me, at ony rate,' said Cleg.

And with a little pressing, James Annan did unburden his sore heart.

'Ye see,' he said, 'Janet's bonny—or I think sae——'

'It is the same thing exactly!' interjected Cleg.

'She's bonny, an' easy to be doin' wi'. She's no sair ava' in the way o' expense. She is a natural saver hersel', an' she's aye at me to be puttin' by the siller. O, in some ways it is juist like heeven—nae leemonades, nae swing rides, nae merry-go-rounds, nae shows! I declare she cares no a buckie for Pepper's Ghost. In that respect there's no a mair agreeabler lass in the toon. Janet is aye pleased to tak' a walk on the Calton, or maybe in the Gardens, or to the Museum, or doon the shore to Leith to see the ships, or, what pleases her best, juist doon to the Waverley Station to see the Heelant train come in. O, Cleg, she is sic a weel-dooin', couthy, kindly lass, that ony man micht hae been prood o' her.'

'What is't then,' said Cleg, 'since she's sae perfect? Is't the poetry?' To Cleg 'the poetry' was a trouble which might seize a victim at any moment, like the toothache. 'And then where are ye?' he would add, cogently.

But it was not the poetry. It was a deeper grief. It appeared from the tale which Cleg laboriously extracted from the reluctant and deeply-wounded suitor, that Janet, though a well-doing lass in every respect, had one grave fault.

All day she was at work quietly and willingly. It was the nature of James's occupation that he should be in the neighbourhood in the early morning. At that hour Janet, in her working gown, was all that heart could desire. But when Cleaver's boy chanced to go round in the afternoon, or met Janet by appointment, some malicious pixie had wrought a sea-change in the lass of Inverness.

She would then tell, with the greatest candour, and engaging innocence, tales which even a faithful lover could not otherwise characterise than as 'whoppers.' This mania appeared to come upon her whenever she had taken off her morning wrapper and put on her company dress. She was going (so she declared) to 'the mistress' to ask for a few evenings off in order to fulfil her innumerable social engagements. Every house where at any time she had been engaged (as kitchen-maid) opened wide its doors to her as a welcome guest. She told the cook, who listened with unconcealed scorn, how she had been at balls and suppers galore in 'the best houses' in Melville Street and Princes Street. She must really, she said, begin to remodel and refashion some of her many silks and satins for the approaching season.

Only the evening before, she had entertained the servants' hall at Bailie Holden's with an account of a dinner she had been at the night before in the Grange. She had even got off early in order to have her hair done by the hairdresser.

'The hairdresser, as a great favour, is going to arrange it in the latest style for five shillings, instead of ten-and-six, his usual charge,' said Janet of Inverness, with a glance like an angel's for innocence. Then she described her drive to the house in a four-wheeler. 'My hair would have got so blown about, or I should have gone in a hansom, which is much more distinguished.' Her former master had, it appeared, come into the hall to receive her. Two gentlemen had almost quarrelled as to who should see her home. A handsome and distinguished gentleman and a member of Parliament for the city, celebrated for his gallantry to ladies, had, however, forestalled them both, arranged the shawl deliciously about her shoulders with well-accustomed fingers, and had thereafter driven home with her in a hansom.

'It did not matter about the hair then, you know,' said gay Janet of Inverness, looking daringly at Cleaver's boy.

At this the cook had laughed out loud. She then said that it was all lies, and that she had seen Janet walking along the Bridges with another girl at the supposed hour of the dinner. Thus was shame brought upon Cleaver's boy and upon the pride and good name of his sweetheart.

'An' what do ye think I should do, Cleg?' asked James Annan.

'I wad gie her a lickin' and gar her stop,' said Cleg, who had still prehistoric notions as to the discipline of women.

'Na,' said Cleaver's boy; 'I hae thocht o' that. But, man, she's no like Susy or Sal. Ye couldna lift a hand to her when she looks at ye wi' yon e'en, an' tells ye that her faither was either a Highland Chief or a Toon Councillor o' Inverness. I couldna do it, Cleg.'

'Hoot,' said Cleg, 'then I wad try no to heed. She may grow oot o't. An' thae Heelant folk are aye leein' onyway. Think on a' the lees they tell aboot their Bonny Prince Chairlie!'

'I hae tried no to mind,' answered Cleaver's boy, sadly; 'but when I see the ither yins a' laughin' at her an' her no seeing it, but gaun straight on wi' her daft-like story, I tell ye, Cleg, it pits me fair wild. There'll be murder dune, Cleg, gin it's no stoppit.'

'Weel, Cleaver,' said Cleg philosophically, 'I think I see the

reason on't. She disna gang to shows an' theaytres, to save the siller; but she says she gangs, an' that costs naething. I dinna see what ye hae to compleen o'!

'If that's a' ye can tell me,' said Cleaver's boy, indignantly, 'I wadna hae missed muckle if ye had stayed at hame.'

'Hoots, butcher,' said Cleg, with indulgence, 'dinna gang a aff like the fuff o' a match. There's little sense and nae siller in that. But I'll tell ye what, butcher: I'll speak to Miss Celie. She will ken what ye had better do.'

It was thus indirectly that Providence was appealed to in the Sooth Back.

ADVENTURE XXV.

A COMELY PROVIDENCE IN A NEW FROCK.

CLEG was as good as his word. He went that very night to call on Miss Tennant at Aurelia Villa. He found her in a philanthropic frame of mind. She had received from the dressmaker a dress of the latest mode, and she was conscious that the new fashion suited her like a garment fashioned by the fairies in a dream. Also (what was even better) that it would make other girls whose shoulders were not so good and whose figure was less slim and graceful, look perfectly hideous. Yet they would have to wear it. Celie felt that evening that there was little left to wish for in this sinful world. She looked out of the window toward the west. There was also (it seemed on purpose) a beautiful sunset which glorified the purple cliffs of Arthur's Seat—a quiet, providential sunset, for it went so well with the colour of her new dress. Besides, here was Mr. Donald Iverach walking slowly up the Avenue. And yet some people complained that this was not a good world! What would folk say next?

But Cleg forestalled the Junior Partner. He came by the back door, and when in a strait betwixt two, a serving maid will always answer a knock at the back before a ring at the front door. The back door is more variously interesting.

So Cleg had the floor of the house, and was just finishing his tale, when Mr. Donald Iverach was announced.

Celie held out her hand to him, with a motion which signified at once a welcome and a desire that he should not interrupt. So the Junior Partner, who had for some time been accustomed to

devote more time to the study of her moods than he had ever done to his Bible (and he had not neglected that either when nobody saw him), sat down upon a sofa and became interested in the pattern of some crochet work, which Miss Celie had tossed on a chair with characteristic impetuosity when she had rushed across the room to greet Cleg.

'Are ye gaun to pit on that dress on Sabbath at the Sunday School?' asked Cleg, when he had time to think a little about his own affairs.

Celie looked at him with a small start of ingenuous wonder. It was a good little start in its way, and expressed amazement that anyone should notice so plain and simple a thing as her new dress. It is an undoubted fact that she was a truthful girl, and it is also a fact that she was quite aware how instantly the summer dress had riveted the attention of both Cleg and the Junior Partner. Yet the little start expressed as plainly as words her surprise, even her sorrow, that in the midst of so serious a world the minds of men and boys should dwell upon so vain a thing as a girl's gown. Perhaps Celie's little start was her way of telling stories. For the sage sayeth that all women tell stories habitually and unintentionally, whereas men tell them only occasionally but intentionally.

At any rate, whether it was the start or whether it was merely owing to her sympathetic nature, after a moment's consideration of the sad failing of Janet of Inverness, Celie lifted her eyes to those of the Junior Partner.

'Poor girl,' she said, 'I quite understand; don't you?'

'You see, I have not heard,' said the Junior Partner, hesitating.

Celie instantly withdrew her eyes from his. She looked at once hurt and disappointed. He set up for being sympathetic and kind, and he had failed to understand a simple thing like this. He was clearly unworthy of confidence. Celie Tennant turned to Cleg for assistance. He was looking at her with wide eyes of boyish adoration. Cleg at any rate understood. She turned half round in her chair and the profile which she presented to Mr. Donald Iverach struck a chill through the room like that part of Greenland which looks towards the Pole. Celie's lovers did not lack varied interests in their life; and perhaps that was why she had so many. For in the affairs of the heart most men like good sport and a run for their money.

'Come, Cleg,' she said, rising, 'I want to speak to you. My father is in the garden, Mr. Iverach!' she added, pointedly.

What Mr. Iverach said under his breath of his excellent friend Mr. Robert Greg Tennant at that moment, it is perhaps better not to write down. He rose and went to the window. From the wide space of its oriel, he watched with furtive sidelong gloom the confabulation of Celie and Cleg. Celie was explaining something with great animation to the boy, who looked down and seemed a little doubtful. Then with inimitable archness, which seemed thrown away upon an Arab of the city (if it were intended for him), Celie explained the whole matter over again from the top of the steps. She went a little way back towards the house.

'Now you quite understand?' she cried with impressive emphasis. And lest he should not yet comprehend, she turned ere she reached the door, ran to Cleg at the gate with still more inimitable daintiness, and, with her hand upon his arm, she explained the whole thing all over again. The Junior Partner felt a little string tighten somewhere about the region in which (erroneously) he believed his heart to lie. He clenched his fist at the sight.

'O confound it!' he remarked, for no very obvious reason, as he turned away.

But Celie was full of the most complete unconsciousness. Yet (of course without knowing it) she quite spoilt the game of two young men, who were playing lawn tennis on the court of a neighbouring house. Their returns grew wilder and their services were beneath contempt. Their several partners (attractive young women whom the new style of dress did not suit) met casually at the net, and one of them remarked to the other, 'Isn't she a minx? And her pretending to be good and all that!' Which was perhaps their way of clenching fists and saying, 'Confound it!' Or worse.

Then in a little while Cleg went down the Avenue with a sense that the heavens had fallen, and that angels were getting quite common about the garden gates of the South Side. He carried the arm on which Celie had laid her hand a little apart from him. It was as blissfully sensitive as if he had been ten years older.

Celie stood a moment at the gate looking after him. She shaded her eyes from the sunset and looked down the long street. It is a charming pose when one is sure of one's arms and shoulders. At this moment one of the young men in the garden sent a ball over the house, and the eyes of his partner met those of the other girl. Peace was upon the earth at that sweet hour of sunset, but

good-will to women was not in their two hearts. Celie felt that the light summer silk had already paid for itself.

'I don't believe a bit in religion—so there!' said the girl next door to her friend over the net.

At that moment Celie gave a little sigh to think that her first night in the new garment was so nearly over. 'And father wanted to give me a black silk,' said Celie Tennant to herself. Celie felt that she had not wasted her time nor her father's money.

So to show her gratitude she went and found her father. He was slowly walking up and down the little plot of garden, meditatively smoking his large evening pipe. He stopped now before a favourite row of cabbages, and now at the end of the strawberry bed. He regarded them equally with the same philosophical and meditative attention. He was a practical man and insisted on growing vegetables in his own private domains at the back, leaving his daughter to cultivate roses and the graces in the front garden.

Celie elevated her nose and sniffed as she came out. 'O father, what a horrid smell of tobacco you are making!'

'It is almost inevitable,' he said, apologetically; 'you see it is tobacco I am smoking.'

If it had been assafoetida, Celie could not have appeared more disgusted.

'I thought your young thieves smoked at that club of yours,' said her father.

'Oh, yes; but that is different,' she answered.

'Yes, it *is* different,' chuckled her parent, thinking of what his tobacco cost him.

Then Celie went on to explain all about Cleaver's boy and his trouble, telling the sad tale of the 'failing' of Janet of Inverness, as, well—as I should like to have the tale of my weaknesses told, if it were necessary that they should be told at all.

Her father smoked and listened. Sometimes he lifted a snail from the leaf of a cabbage with care. Anon he kicked a stone sideways off the path, and ever he smoked, listened, and nodded without comment.

'These are all your orders, ma'am?' he asked slowly, when his daughter had finished.

'I'll pull your ears, father, now I will,' said she, with equal want of connection.

And did it.

'Oh, I had forgotten Mr. Iverach!' she cried, running off

towards the house with a little gesture of despair; 'what shall I do?'

'Give him his orders, too!' her father called after her, as the last flutter of the new dress flashed through the twinkling poplars.

ADVENTURE XXVI.

R. S. V. P.

A GREAT event happened in the back-kitchen of Bailie Holden. The postman had brought a letter with a fine monogram—a very stiff, square letter, for Miss Janet Urquhart. The table-maid, who considered herself quite as good as a governess, examined it as though there must needs be some mistake in the address. The housemaid turned it about and looked at it end-ways and upside down, to see if there might not be another name concealed somewhere. She rubbed it with her apron to see if the top would come off and something be revealed beneath. The cook, into whose hands the missive next passed, left a perfect tracing of her thumb and fore-finger upon it, done in oils, and very well executed too.

In this condition it reached the back-kitchen at last, and the hands of Janet of Inverness. As she took the letter in her little damp fingers, she grew pale to the lips. What she feared, I cannot tell—probably only the coming true of some of her dreams.

In a cluster round the door stood the housemaid, the table-maid, and family cat—the one which went habitually on four legs, I mean. The cook moved indignantly about the range, clattering tongs, pans, and other instruments of music, as it is the immemorial use of all cooks when the bird in the breast does not sing sweetly. She was, of course, quite above curiosity as to what Janet's letter might contain.

'Likely it's an invitation!' sneered the housemaid.

'Aye, frae the police!' added the table-maid from the doorway. She was plain, and Cleaver's boy never stopped to gossip with her. Not that she cared or would have stood talking with the likes of him.

The cook banged the top of the range, like Tubal-cain when Naamah vexed him in that original stithy, near by the city of Enoch in the land of Nod.

Janet of Inverness opened the letter. Scarcely could she believe her eyes. It was a formal invitation upon a beautifully written card, and contained a wish on the part of Mr. Greg Tennant and Miss Tennant that Miss Janet Urquhart would favour them with her company at Aurelia Villa on the evening of Friday the 17th, at eight o'clock. R.S.V.P.

Janet sank into a seat speechless, still holding the invitation. The table-maid came and looked over her shoulder.

'Goodness me!' she exclaimed, as she read the card.

'She's been tellin' the truth after a', said the housemaid, who, having some claims to beauty, was glad of Janet's good fortune, and hoped that the like might happen to herself.

'I dinna believe a word o't!' said the cook indignantly. 'I'se warrant she wrote it hersel'!

But Janet had not written it herself. She could not even bring herself to write the answer, though she had received a sound School Board education. But the three R's do not contemplate the answering of invitations upon thick cardboard, ending 'R.S.V.P.' They stop at the spelling of 'trigonometry' and the solving of vulgar fractions.

In spite of her silks and satins and her vaunted experience, Janet did not know the meaning of 'R.S.V.P.' But the housemaid had not brushed clothes ten years for nothing.

'It means "Reply shortly, very pleased"!' said she. Which, being substantially correct, settled the question.

Nevertheless, poor Janet was in great perturbation. When Cleaver's boy went to see her that evening before going on duty she showed him the card.

'What shall I do?' she said. 'I hae nothing fit to wear, and I am feared to gang.'

Cleaver's boy looked up at the ceiling of the back-kitchen, as he sat on the edge of the sink, unconscious that there was a tap running behind him and that the plug was in.

'There was that purple brocade ye telled me aboot, wi' the auld lace and the pearls that belonged to your grandmither, the Earl's dochter,' said James Annan, meditatively.

'O aye,' said Janet. 'Yes, of course there is that ane.' But she did not look happy.

'Or there is the plain white muslin wi' the crimson sash aboot the waist, that the twa gentleman were for stickin' ane anither aboot, yon nicht they quarrelled wha was to see ye hame.'

'Aye,' said Janet, piteously, 'there's that ane too.'

'An' what say ye,' continued James Annan remorselessly, 'to the yellow sattin, trimmed wi' flounces o' glory-pidgeon roses and——?'

Cleaver's boy suddenly stopped. He had been feeling for some time a growing coolness somewhere. But at this point the water in the sink ran over on the floor, and he turned round to discover that he had been sitting in a full trough of excellent Moorfoot water, with the spigot running briskly down his back all the while.

'O James,' cried Janet, pleased to get a chance to change the subject, 'what for did ye do that, James? And your new breeks, too!' she added, with an expression of supreme pain.

'I didna do it for naething,' remarked Cleaver's boy, tartly. 'I didna do it ava'. It was you that left the spigot rinnin' and the plug in!' he added, after a thoughtful pause, while he realised how cool a sitz-bath can be, even on a summer evening, when one stands by an open window.

Now nothing is more provoking, when you are performing a high and noble work in the reformation of another person's morals, than to have the thread of your weighty discourse broken by something so ridiculous as sitting down in a bucket of water. There was every reason why Cleaver's boy should be annoyed.

But Janet broke out in a sobbing ecstasy of laughter, which irritated her lover more even than her wrong-doing.

'I wonder at you,' he said, 'telling a' thae lees when ye haena a dress to your back, forbye the alpaca that ye pit on on Sabbaths!'

It was a mistake, and Cleaver's boy knew it as soon as he had the words out of his mouth.

Janet instantly stopped in the midst of her laughter.

'I would have you know,' she said with dignity, 'that I shall accept the invitation. And I will never speak to you again. I'll thank you to take yourself out of my presence, James Annan!'

'And out of Bailie Holden's back-kitchen!' continued her lover, whose colour did not diminish with the growing coolness consequent upon standing in a draught. Then as he went up the steps from the area he cried, 'Be sure and put on the brocade, Janet!'

It was an unbearable affront, for Janet had told her stories so often, and with so much innocent feeling, that though, of course, she could not quite believe them herself, she had nevertheless all the feelings of an indignant moralist insulted and outraged in her tenderest susceptibilities.

ADVENTURE XXVII.

JANET OF INVERNESS TASTES THE HERB BITTER-SWEET.

JANET duly arrived at the house of Mr. Robert Greg Tennant at the hour named in the invitation. She had had a great struggle with herself, but pride had ultimately triumphed. Her fellow-servants had given her no peace. She had, indeed, to dress in her black alpaca. But, sure enough, her hair had been done in the latest fashion by her only friend, the girl with whom the cook had seen her walking, who was an assistant in a hair-dresser's shop. It was so twisted and tortured that Janet felt 'as if she had slept on it the wrong way,' as she expressed it to herself. She passed and re-passed the end of the Avenue half-a-dozen times, but her courage would not let her ring the bell of the corner house. For there were lights in nearly every window, and a cab had just driven away from the door.

Poor Janet's heart leapt within her, and she had half a mind to turn homeward and confess that she had been romancing. But another cab stopped before the gate, and through the open door she saw a glimpse of lights and flowers that looked to her like Paradise—as she imagined it from the hymn-singing at the Salvation Army meetings.

So as the last cabman came slowly out of the Avenue, Janet called to him. The man was arranging his rugs about him for a long drive back to his stand at the centre of the town.

'I'll give you a sixpence if you will turn about and drive me up to that door you have just been at,' said Janet.

'Done,' said the man; 'and good money for the job.'

So, without betraying the least surprise or curiosity, the man turned about his vehicle, and Janet tripped daintily inside. They drove up to the door with prodigious rattle and ceremony. The cabman jumped from his seat and rang the bell in form. When the door was opened, Janet Urquhart paid the man his easily-earned sixpence. He touched his hat, and she went leadenly up the steps.

A trim maid-servant was at the door, who evidently had received very definite orders, for only the faintest curl of the nostril betrayed her own opinion of the affair.

When Janet was shown into the cloak-room her troubles began. Should she take off her hat, or not? She looked about to see if

the ladies had left their hats. None were to be seen. Yet she had never seen ladies in the evening, except bareheaded. After long consideration she resolved to keep her hat on. But when she was in the doorway to go up to the drawing-room she saw a lady coming through the outer door with a shawl of soft gauzy wool over her head.

Janet shrank back instantly and turned cold with the thought of her escape. With trembling hands she took off her hat and pinned her veil to it as she had once seen her mistress do. The lady came in, bustling a little like one who knows she is late.

'It is cold to-night,' she said affably to the shy girl standing in the doorway, but without looking at her.

'Yes, ma'am,' said Janet, and the next moment she could have bitten her tongue out for the mistake.

'Oh, how I wish I had never come,' she said a score of times to herself as she went up the stairs.

But it was too late to turn back.

'What name?' said the daintily-capped maiden, with the curl of her nostril a little more accentuated.

For a moment Janet was so taken aback that she could not even remember her own name.

'Janet,' she stammered; 'Janet—from Bailie Holden's.'

The maid's face broadened into a smile, at sight of which poor Janet's lip quivered, and for a moment she thought that she must burst out crying. Scarcely was she able to keep back the welling tears. But the door was a little open, and she saw Miss Celie, whom she already knew and loved. The sight of that pleasant face, dimpling and flashing all over with bright kindness, reassured her.

'Say "Janet Urquhart"!' she said, with a little faltering return of assurance in her voice.

And the trim maid-servant, with a strong protest in her tone, announced in accents of terrifying distinctness, 'Miss Janet Urquhart.'

Then she shut the door, and Janet was left standing aghast and speechless in the bright humming place.

'I would not have done it,' soliloquised the indignant maid outside, 'unless my place had depended on it.'

But within Celie Tennant's drawing-room, poor silly little Janet of Inverness was being most pleasantly and charmingly entertained by her hostess. Celie had, in fact, asked only a few of her most intimate friends, whom she could trust with the

momentous secret of the loves and sorrows of Cleaver's boy. The fascinating cousin from the tented field was there, ready for love or war. But it was to Donald Iverach that the principal work of the evening had been allotted.

It was he who first asked Janet to dance with him. It was he who sat out with her after her desperate failure, for she had lacked the courage to say that she had never learned to dance. It was he who found her a handkerchief, when, with the bitterness of disappointment, the tears at last would not keep down, but welled piteously up from the underlips of Janet's blue and childish eyes. It was Mr. Donald Iverach who took her down to supper, where she suffered agonies over the use of fish-knives and the management of a plate upon her knees. It was he who finally took her aside, and so fervidly pursued his wooing that, had Janet Urquhart been mercenary, he might without doubt have had a suit for breach of promise of marriage successfully brought against him. So far did the wooing proceed, and so fervently persistent was this wicked Junior Partner, that, bewildered and dazzled, poor Janet found herself being pressed to name the happy day, and, what is more, in some danger of doing it, too. As for the Junior Partner, that young man was obviously excited, but seemed quite unconscious of the risks he was running. Had the Senior Partner heard him, he would undoubtedly have considered his son to be rapidly qualifying for a strait jacket. But the infatuated youth held on his way. Janet and he were sitting in a little alcove at the top of the stairs, cobwebbed with the latest artistic Japonaiseries of the period.

'And now,' urged the reckless youth, when he had sealed in due form the silent acquiescence he had won, 'let us go back and tell them all that we are going to be married.'

Mr. Donald Iverach was certainly quite mad. But Janet of Inverness was madder still, for instead of accepting the very eligible young man with modest reluctance, she burst out crying all at once without the least warning, and ran downstairs, leaving Donald Iverach standing spellbound looking after her. Down the stair and through the hall she ran. She opened the door and flew out into the night, crying 'James! James! I want you, James!'

And the strangest part of the whole is that even as she opened the door two dark forms separated at the outer gate.

'There noo, look you after her,' said Cleg Kelly to Cleaver's boy. And James Annan went as he was bidden. The girl's wild cry of 'James! James!' hushed into quite another way of saying

the same words, when she found herself clasped in the arms of Janet's boy—late Cleaver's. For James Annan not only had the root of the matter in him by nature, but, as we have seen, he was a lad of some little experience.

'What did I tell you, sir?' said Cleg to the Junior Partner, as they stood together on the step, and looked after the pair who had vanished into the darkness.

'It came out all right, I grant,' said Mr. Donald Iverach, 'but I want no more games with pretty kitchen-maids. I will tell you what—for three full minutes I thought she was going to take me!'

And the Junior Partner went down the street at the rate of five miles an hour.

(To be continued.)

FROM CHITRAL TO GILGIT.

ON May 15, having little more than a month of leave remaining, I left Chitral to return to India. I was fortunate enough to obtain permission to travel by the Gilgit route, in company with another ex-correspondent of the Chitral Relief Force. We felt ourselves to be in great luck, for, as a rule, Gilgit is unapproachable to the general public except *via* Kashmir. The difficulties of transport are so great that all available coolies are required for the carrying of Government stores, and hitherto no one but an occasional distinguished traveller has been allowed along this route unless on duty.

We arrived at Gilgit on May 26. The distance is estimated at 230 miles. No accurate measurements have been made, so it is impossible to be precise.

There are twenty-two ordinary marches, therefore it will be seen that we had to do double work, getting over just under twenty miles of the ground nearly every day—not bad going, considering the state of the road, which in parts is very rough and entails a lot of hard climbing. We found that our movements had to be regulated in a great measure by the travelling capabilities of our servants. We could not afford to push on at such a rate that they should be left behind or knocked up. As it was, we found it expedient to mount them on ponies whenever we could, and the small extra expense thus incurred was more than repaid by their arriving in camp ready to work, cook, &c.

The worst bits of road we encountered were in the earlier marches out from Chitral, where in several places the road had only recently been remade, after having been broken with a view to barring the advance of Colonel Kelly's force. At the first a river runs in a narrow valley with precipitous sides, and the manner in which a roadway is cut or built on the face of these precipices is really remarkable; sometimes it is simply a sort of scaffolding pasted, as it were, on to the side of the cliff. For the remainder of the journey the road is, generally speaking, fairly good. There is some stiff up and down hill work, and a lot of rough, rocky ground to be got over. In the last sixty miles or so, from Goupis to Gilgit, there is a regular road, kept in order, with

easy gradients, and of some width—the work of successive R.E. officers, not the least busy of whom has been Lieutenant Fowler. Some of the bridges in the earlier stages of our journey were rather sketchy structures, and our own ponies were rather shy of crossing them. Many of them are some twenty yards long, little more than a yard in width, and devoid of side rail of any sort. The footway consists of untrimmed, split wood, roughly fitted together, the interstices filled with stones, and the whole structure swings and sways even with the weight of a man. This, with a roaring torrent twenty or thirty feet below, is a high test for the nerve of a polo pony, whose home lies in the boundless plains of India.

We had four animals between us, and before leaving Chitral we had them all carefully shod. However, the stones and rocks proved a severe trial, and at the end of our fourth march, which brought us to Mastuj, we were already in trouble. We found in the fort a good blacksmith, who put matters to rights; but the next two days' long marches to Ghizr produced fresh difficulties. There being no professional farrier at Ghizr, the Commissariat Sergeant most kindly offered to try his hand, and succeeded in nailing on three shoes that had come off. Next day we marched twenty miles to Pingal, and found on our arrival that three of our ponies had lost five shoes among them. There remained two long, rough marches between us and Goupis, the nearest place where we could hope to find a blacksmith. In our extremity we were reduced to practising a little amateur shoeing, but we lacked the necessary tools, and it is just conceivable that we also lacked the necessary skill. Anyhow, we could make no job of it, and there was nothing for it but to resign ourselves to doing the next day's journey on foot, our ponies being led all the way to Goupis, where they arrived very footsore. At Goupis we found a good workman, and after leaving that place had no further difficulties.

From Chitral we travelled in company with a party, about twelve in number, of the Puniali levy, who were returning to their own homes. Though the country was by now quiet, some escort was considered essential. Some of these men had been in Chitral during the siege; others had come with Colonel Kelly's force, and were able to give us an account of their battles as we passed the places where the various fights had occurred. They were capital men, and most useful in getting coolies, supplies, &c. We were always able to procure milk, eggs, and fowls in the villages. At

Mastuj and other posts on the road we got regular rations for our servants and ponies, as well as tea, flour, rice, and sugar for ourselves. We made treacle out of a sort of native unrefined sugar, and found it an excellent substitute for butter or jam.

Most days we tried to make our start at 5 A.M., first having some eggs and tea. All our food we carried ready cooked in saddle-bags, and half-way through our day's journey we rested for an hour or an hour and a half, during which time we had a good meal, nothing requiring preparation except the tea. As we were doing what were two recognised marches a day, we generally had to change coolies half-way.

At Mastuj we slept in the fort, and were very well entertained. Lieutenant Moberly, in political and military charge, has seen a lot of service in these parts. The fort was besieged for eighteen days, and for the whole time the garrison was without news from outside. The altitude is 7,600 feet. We found the place very cold, with much snow all round. It is built on a flat piece of ground, about two miles square, at the junction of four valleys. We had a magnificent view of Tirieh Mir at sunrise—one of the finest sights I ever saw.

We crossed the Shandur Pass, 12,500 feet in height, on May 20. The snow had just disappeared from the roadway, and the grass was springing up.

I have not yet seen any but a brief account of the passage of the guns over the Shandur Pass. This has struck me as a very fine achievement, and a few more details on the subject may be of interest. The guns were carried by mules in the ordinary way as far as Tera (about fifteen miles from the top of the pass). Between Ghizr and Tera there was about three feet of snow, a fresh fall occurring on April 1 and 2. At noon on April 3 the guns, the 32nd Pioneers, some Kashmir Sappers and Miners, under Lieutenant Oldham, R.E., and a party of fifty Kashmir troops, under Lieutenant Gough, 2nd Gurkhas, started from Tera. A few miles further on the mules began to stick in the snow. For a short distance they were taken along the river-bed, but the intense cold of the water was beyond the mule-drivers' powers of endurance. After about another mile the snow became so deep that the mules were absolutely unable to proceed. The guns were unloaded, and an attempt was made to drag them along on sledges, but the rate of progress was hopelessly slow. The sledges were abandoned, and resort was had to the only remaining alterna-

tive—that of bodily carrying the guns. The Pioneers, Sappers, and Kashmir infantry all lent the gunners a hand. The snow became deeper as they went, and it was only after hours of extraordinary exertion that they succeeded in getting the guns within four miles of Lungur, the camping ground at the foot of the pass, where they were left for the night, under charge of a guard. They had gone only between five and six miles, and it was 11 P.M. before the troops reached their camping ground at Lungur. There they lay down on deep snow, the intense cold precluding all possibility of sleep. Next day the Pioneers and Sappers crossed the pass, and encamped at Laspur. The gunners, under Lieutenant Stewart, R.A., and Gough's Kashmir infantry, went back for the guns, and brought them into Lungur in the same laborious fashion. On April 5 they left Lungur at 8 A.M. The snow was now more beaten down by the traffic, and they were able to get along somewhat faster. Some coolies were sent back by Captain Borrodaile from Laspur, and the party succeeded in getting the guns across the pass and joining the rest of the troops at Laspur in the course of the afternoon. Of Gough's men, twenty-five carried two rifles and two kits apiece, while the remaining twenty-five helped with the guns.

A place of sad interest that we passed was the scene of the disaster to Ross's party and the cave concerning which Ghanda Singh told such a tragic story.

Sepoy Ghanda Singh was one of ninety men who started with Captain Ross and Lieutenant Jones from Mastuj on March 7. The first day's march brought them to Buni, where they halted for the night. Next morning (the 8th) they set out at 8 A.M., leaving thirty men at Buni. Ross, with twenty men, formed the advanced guard, Jones following with the remaining forty. They took with them one day's rations. More than this they could not carry, as very few coolies were obtainable. At 3 P.M. they reached Karagh. About two miles further on they came to a narrow defile, where they were fired on by detachments of the enemy, posted in sungars on the opposite side of the defile, and eight men were almost immediately hit.

The party got into an empty sungar, which they held for some time, returning the fire directed upon them.

As the enemy were in great force, they decided to fall back on Karagh, and moved off in that direction. Arrived at the mouth of the defile, they found it closed by a large force of the

enemy, and further retreat was impossible. They therefore returned to the sungar previously occupied, and established themselves in it.

During the night they attempted to make their way over the high hills behind them, but found they were held by the enemy, and they had once more to return to the sungar.

There was one large sungar in which most of the party were, a recess at the foot of an almost perpendicular cliff, about 40 feet high, hollowed out by the action of water. It was from 25 to 30 feet long, and 15 feet deep at the widest place. Across the mouth of the cave a breastwork of stones had been built. The space was terribly confined for the numbers it had to contain. There were also two smaller sungars, in one of which Ghanda Singh was posted with four other men. All day on the 9th they were fired on by the enemy, and several men were hit.

Early on the 10th Ghanda Singh, and the four men who had been with him, went to the large sungar to see what was the state of affairs. There they found twenty-seven Sikhs, all wounded, and a hospital assistant, Chumba Lall; Ross and Jones, with the unwounded men, having, they were told, gone to try and cut their way through to Mastuj to obtain assistance.

They all went into the larger sungar, which they strengthened as far as possible. In this they held out for eight days, fighting continuously. All this while they had no food, and could only obtain water by sallying out at night to a stream not far off. During this time several men died.

On the ninth day (March 18) a large party of some two or three hundred Chitralis came from Reshun. They had with them, as prisoners, two of Lieutenant Fowler's native servants. One of these was sent to the Sikhs with a flag of truce, and with a message to the effect that, if they would surrender their arms, they would be allowed to go unharmed to Mastuj. The other servant came later bringing a similar message. This, they said, the Chitralis had sworn on the Koran; but it is supposed that one of the servants advised the Sikhs not to acquiesce to the terms offered them.

The hospital assistant, Chumba Lall, was sent to parley with the enemy, and on his return said that the Chitralis had sworn on the Koran, before his eyes, to faithfully observe the compact, and that all appearances were satisfactory.

There was some discussion as to what should be done. Ghanda Singh and some others were for fighting to the end, but the majority were in favour of accepting the terms, and their counsel prevailed. Accordingly they laid down their arms, and marched out of the sungar.

The Chitralis seized and bound them, and took them to Karagh, where they were put into two houses, under a guard. They were searched, and most of their belongings and clothes taken from them.

Ghanda Singh had with him forty rupees (about 2*l.* 10*s.*), which he showed quietly to a Chitrali.

Next day the Sikhs were taken to the riverside, and were all cut to pieces with swords, except Ghanda Singh, who was claimed as a slave by the Chitrali to whom he had shown the rupees. He was taken to Karagh, where his hair and beard were cut off; he was given food, and was lodged in a mosque for sanctuary.

Next day he was taken to Senoghar, where he was kept four days. After that he was moved to the village where his Chitrali protector lived, and there he remained for nearly a month, being fairly well treated, though, on more than one occasion, suggestions were made that he should be killed.

At last the Chitrali he was with, becoming concerned for his safety, told him he might go to Mastuj, and started with him. Soon after gaining the road they met Labha, a Dogra, who had escaped from the remnants of Fowler's party, and with him Ghanda Singh continued the journey, eventually reaching Mastuj on April 29.

At Ghizr, where we arrived after a twenty-five mile march, including the crossing of the Shandur Pass, there is a small post commanded by a British officer who lives in a native house, in which most of his men are also quartered. It has been rendered defensible by building walls, thorn hedges, &c., but is not a comfortable residence. We were glad enough to get there, however, and a wet night made the hospitable reception we met with doubly welcome. Even at the latter end of May it was unpleasantly raw and cold; there was little vegetation and few trees—altogether not an inviting spot.

At Goupis there is a regular fort, built under the direction of Captain Townshend. It contains fairly comfortable quarters for two British officers, and is very well built, but, as is almost inevitable in these parts, is a good deal commanded by the surrounding hills.

At Gakuch, a long march from Goupis, we parted with our escort, whose chief, Habibulla Khan, is son of the Khan of Gakuch. The men had been of great service to us, for the villagers along the route had lately had a good dose of coolie work and were not particularly anxious for more. They care nothing for money, never having been in the habit of using it for their ordinary transactions, and not understanding the process.

After the long miles of bare hillside we had traversed, Gilgit seemed to us a garden of Eden. We found wonderful crops of corn, mulberries dropping from the trees, and apricots and apples coming on. The British Agency is modelled upon a small English country house, standing in a miniature park, surrounded with wooden palings. We were put up in large tents in the Agency garden, and felt ourselves in clover. Everything was made most comfortable for us.

Upon Captain Stewart, Assistant British Agent, and Lieutenant Dew has fallen a heavy share of work in connection with the Chitral campaign, while they have been denied the satisfaction of actually taking part in the expedition.

THE COTTAGE COUNTESS.

BOLAS MAGNA, in Shropshire, does not differ conspicuously from many another village in the green Midlands upon which the great Wrekin looks from his height of thirteen hundred feet and more. It is girdled by pleasant meadows and large fields. A river caresses its neighbourhood—the winding Tern, which the rustics, not without fair reason, spell ‘turn.’ Small patches of woodland diversify the landscape: fir-capped red knolls and such trivial copses as the pheasant loves until October begins. There are orchards and little gardens rich in rather garish flowers wherever there are cottages. The air is sweet, with no savour of the town about it. And it has a red brick church on a gentle hillock towards which the small red brick tenements of the village are built ascendingly. One could fancy the local competition for land in the immediate proximity of the church must be keen, wholly because of the added conveniences for the Sunday service—by no means because of the beauty of the sacred building. This, like many another Midlands’ church, depends for its interest wholly upon its associations. In itself it is an ugly little monster, as may be imagined, since its red brick tower carries four white stone urns as pinnacles. Its weathercock points towards the bosky Wrekin more often than not. In another quarter may be seen the eminence of Hawkstone, dear to lovers of the picturesque, and recalling that valorous soldier of the Peninsular war, Lord Hill.

But, though so placid and tame, in an endearing sense, Bolas Magna is famous. Here was wrought out that ‘romance of the peerage’ with which the lords of Burleigh are somewhat intimately connected. Hither, on a certain July evening in 1791, came Henry Cecil, in as wayward a mood as a man of seven-and-thirty may be supposed capable of. He was heir to a noble title and estates well worthy of Tennyson’s rhymes:—

Parks with oak and chesnut shady,
Parks and ordered gardens great;
Ancient homes of lord and lady,
Built for pleasure or for state.

There have been many descriptions of the wooing and wedding in Bolas of the tenth Earl and first Marquis of Exeter. They do

not err in the lack of variety. Some are ribald, some are fanciful, and most are built more on conjecture than on solid evidence. Lord Tennyson made Henry Cecil a landscape painter; others have clapped on him the wholly absurd mantle of a wandering undertaker. He is said to have been taken for a Napoleonic spy; further, a highwayman. But there need really be no limit to such imaginings. A hundred years ago, when the reign of the tourist had not begun, it may well have roused the wonder of the peaceful inhabitants of remote Bolas that a stranger, with plain marks of good breeding on him, should be content to come unheralded into their midst, and live with them under the transparent *alias* of Mr. John Jones. But an undertaker! Anything more absurd can hardly be conceived. On the most plausible plea, this grim conjecture can only have been excited by the uncommon gravity of the stranger's manners and demeanour. It is, at any rate, a proof that the Shropshire undertakers of 1791 were tolerably courteous gentlemen.

One thing is certain. Henry Cecil asked and obtained a night's lodging in a little cottage hard against the west door of the church. Here dwelt Thomas Hoggins, his wife, and their only daughter Sarah. The house had a most winsome outlook. From the front the Wrekin, some seven miles distant, was seen to perfection; and from the back the garden dropped abruptly to the green meadows of the Tern, which here knots itself into a pair of spectacles; and the distant landscape was also admirable. The house is gone now, but its site lies bare, with a *débris* of red bricks and desiccated mortar littering the grass. The old man who showed it to us the other day did so with mild glee; the Hogginses and their fate appealed profoundly to him. 'Where you see them nettles,' he said, 'it was their cellar; and it was about among the docks, a bit to the right, that she was feeding the chickens when he saw her and fell in love with her.'

Now this was begging the question with a vengeance. According to the traditions of Bolas—which this stout white-haired ancient had had at his tongue tip for more than forty years—Henry Cecil lost no time in discerning that Sarah Hoggins, aged seventeen, was the ideal wife his heart desired. He was already married, to be sure, but 'Finis' had been written to that chapter of his life. Miss Vernon, of Hanbury, had not answered expectation. There were circumstances in her conduct which entitled him to sue for and expect a divorce from her. Proceed-

ings had already been taken. The disappointed husband was again heart-free, and, according to Bolas, Sarah Hoggins was no sooner seen than she filled the void in Henry Cecil's life. Some say she was washing clothes at the moment; others, that she was milking a cow; our ancient friend referred to chickens. Whatever she was doing, she is supposed to have taken his heart by storm. Yet even her beauty has been questioned. She is described on precise information as 'fat, good-tempered, and amiable'; these qualities and her youth are supposed to have been enough to allure a man in the most fastidious decade of his existence, brought up moreover in a most fastidious school of manners. For Henry Cecil had not lived a recluse's life. He had been member of Parliament for Stamford three times, and must have seen much of the Court of which the Prince Regent was the very commanding centre-piece and inspiration. Were mere plumpness, youth, and good temper likely to suffice to charm such a man? It seems improbable, unless he were sunk to so low a pitch of melancholy and self-disesteem that his heart might be tempted to leap eagerly towards the first kindly face that drew him out of his depressing humours. No: it is fairer and more reasonable to credit Sarah Hoggins with at least something of the beauty that appears in Sir Thomas Lawrence's portrait in the billiard-room at Burleigh House. There is no doubt a measure of idealisation in the picture, but the great artist would not else have had the audacity to make a plain woman so deliberately into a beautiful woman. For our part, we prefer, on this count, to accept the opinion of Bolas on the subject, as expressed by our old guide. 'She was said to have been a fine young woman, with a pretty face of her own.' This, moreover, gets some authority from the fact that Bolas is still noticeable for its attractive faces. Our guide said so, and it was easy judging. Complexion is one of Bolas's strong points; thanks to the broad sunlight on the village, and the tonic breezes.

The romance of this wedding between the aristocrat and the cottager's daughter is, however, slightly tempered by what preceded it. If Henry Cecil loved Sarah Hoggins at first sight, and for her sake persuaded her parents to receive him as a lodger, he nevertheless gave some one else, even here, a prior offer of his hand and heart. This may be a sad blow to believers in the crude incongruities of penny fiction, but it must be accepted. There lived at the Buttery Farm in the neighbourhood another beautiful, and

for him a more eligible, damsel, named Taylor. Henry Cecil made Miss Taylor's acquaintance, loved her, asked her to reciprocate his affection, failed, and looked elsewhere. Why he failed it scarcely boots to inquire. It has been said that Mr. Taylor believed in the highwayman legend, and promptly put his foot on the aspirations of Thomas Hoggins's mysterious lodger. At the least he seems to have thought it suspicious that a man like Cecil, with plenty of money in his pocket, should come and obliterate himself in Bolas. As a straightforward gentleman-farmer of Salop, he naturally required a straightforward husband for his daughter. This he obtained subsequently in a Mr. Masfield, who married Miss Taylor, and took her to Wolverhampton, where they both died in due course, the gentleman about half a century afterwards. Perhaps Miss Taylor felt qualms about becoming a mere Mrs. John Jones, quite apart from the inadequacy of her and her father's knowledge of her eager suitor's real circumstances. But most probably the fact that she was already engaged to young Masfield sufficed for the rejection of Henry Cecil's advances. What if this mature and impetuous wooer *did* wear a wig and was incomprehensible to Bolas? Wigs were not the rarities then that they are now. And as for the halo of mystery which surrounded Cecil, that of itself was calculated rather to pique and allure than shock a girl in the stirring times a hundred years ago.

From Miss Taylor Henry Cecil recurred, we will assume, to Sarah Hoggins. She, at any rate, did not reject him; nor was Mr. Hoggins particular in his inquiries about his lodger's means. That these could enable him to buy land near Bolas and arrange for the erection of a fine house was good enough proof to Mr. Hoggins of Mr. Jones's respectability, or at any rate power to keep a wife. Besides, had not Cecil shown himself an obliging man in other ways, as well as in the regular payment of his lodging money? It is said that he one day carried for Sarah's father, on his own shoulders, a fat pig all the way from Bolas to Aqualate Hall. With due regard for the tale, I declare it a myth, having myself walked the distance. No man of Henry Cecil's upbringing would condescend to perspire over so purposeless a feat when he could have obliged Mr. Hoggins just as well by paying for the hire of a pig-carrier. It is six miles to the Boughey's seat at Aqualate, and the season was either summer or early autumn. No; there were a myriad of other and better ways open

to Mr. John Jones for the conciliation of Sarah Hoggins's father without touching a pig.

Be that as it may, on the third of October—some three months only after his coming to Bolas—Henry Cecil led Sarah Hoggins up the red-flagged aisle of the little church and duly wedded her. The oaken pews were no doubt well crowded on that day, and from the simple oaken gallery in the west end not a little cheerful whispering must have proceeded. Bolas still abounds in Sarahs; the name is the commonest of all names on its tombstones; but little the villagers guessed at the magnificent future in store for this girl, one of the lowliest of its Sarahs of that year. One wonders, however, how the heir to the earldom of Exeter felt on the occasion. He could not have been quite free from misgivings. And if he chanced to remember those pregnant words which his great ancestor, the first Lord Burleigh, addressed to his son, 'Thou shalt find there is nothing so irksome in life as a female fool,' he must have perceived that he was tempting fate in an extraordinary degree. His comely young bride might indeed be no fool at Bolas, but as a countess what dared he expect of her?

It is affirmed that he set to work to train his wife's mind. This must have provided him with plenty of occupation. It is pleasant to think of them thus engaged, sauntering along Tern's banks in the buttercupped meadows, now resting by the roots of a gnarled old willow, with a coughing cow and the swishing of the swallows as sole distraction in this fond yet academic pastime. If Cecil were really anything of an artist he would find abundant ensnaring pieces of landscape by the river's banks between Bolas and Water Upton, two miles distant. And in any case the rural loveliness and the rural air and tranquillity were calculated to do much to persuade him that he had not been so very rash after all. He was happy; the future might take care of itself.

Burleigh House, by Stamford, was awaiting him, with its old oaks and elms and its assuming pinnacles and towers. And Burleigh House, by Bolas, was either building or built. The latter is not a remarkable residence for the heir to an earldom, but to Cecil's wife it probably seemed terribly palatial. Here again, however, the dear commentators conflict. Some say Mr. and Mrs. John Jones never lived in it. Henry Cecil's uncle died ere it was finished, and the call to Stamford stupefied Bolas, and put a sublime end to the rumours, scandalous and otherwise, about Mr.

Jones's methods for a livelihood. It does not much matter what happened. Cecil had meantime so thoroughly attuned himself to the local life that he had become a churchwarden. He had buried a child in the little God's-acre upon which his father-in-law's cottage cast a shadow every evening—'the little Henry,' in fact, though our guide the other day would have it that the babe was 'little Annie.' Burleigh House, in Shropshire, is an easy hour's walk from Bolas. It is not now an appanage of the Earls of Exeter. Odd to say, its actual occupants are Taylors, of the same family into which Cecil was at one time so anxious to marry. The Taylors are large people in the local eye. They have noticeable tombs in the Bolas churchyard, and many of them. Some say that the Miss Taylor who married Mr. Masefield expressed regret that she had not had insight enough to discern the blue blood in Mr. John Jones when he sought her in marriage. It is not altogether incredible.

During two years and two months Henry Cecil was content to live with his wife in Bolas as Mr. and Mrs. Jones. Then came the intelligence of his uncle's death—through a country newspaper, according to certain authorities, more probably direct from Stamford, or else the lawyers of the land were singularly inept when our soldiers and sailors were at their best. One particularly vague narrator has it that both Cecil and his wife were with the earl when he died. 'Some years after the marriage,' this legend runs, 'the earl discovered his nephew's retreat, paid off his debts, and invited Mr. and Mrs. Cecil to live with him at Burleigh House, which invitation was gratefully accepted.' But the imagination revolts against this version of the story. For one thing, it puts Lord Tennyson so brutally in the wrong. It seems more congenial to follow the lead of romance at this stage, and watch how the new earl springs the surprise upon his young wife, happy in his love and in her little daughter Sophia, now nearly two years of age. This is the way in which the romancers elevate Mr. Hoggins's daughter to the rank of countess :

'Her husband merely told her that he was called on business into Lincolnshire, and that she must accompany him. Like a good and dutiful wife she at once obeyed his wish, and made the journey seated, as was the fashion of the day, on a pillion behind him.

'They rode on through Cannock Chase, past Lichfield and Leicester, stopping at various gentlemen's and noblemen's seats

on the road, till at last they came within sight of the noble Elizabethan mansion situated in a lordly park.

'Sarah Cecil gazed in admiration, and quietly remarked, "What a magnificent house!"

"How should you like, my dear Sally, to be mistress of such a place?" was her lord's reply.

"Very much indeed, if we were rich enough to live in it."

"I am glad that you like it; the place is yours. I am the Earl of Exeter, and you are not plain Mrs. Cecil, but my countess."

'She could scarcely believe her ears; but she could not mistrust the fond and honest words of her husband. The mystery of the last two years was solved at last.'

And so they enter between a double row of powdered servants, and the theatrical climax is without flaw. If only one could credit it! Common sense, however, will have none of such a story. Henry Cecil, as a man of the world and considerable experience, could have no taste for the risks involved in such a *dénouement*. What if the sudden shock had been too much for his countess, and she had crossed the threshold of his palace only to faint in his arms? Besides, were all the 'gentlemen' and 'noblemen' of the different seats at which they rested between Bolas and Stamford confederates in his affectionate little plot? With regret one feels compelled to doubt the romancers, in short, and to hope rather that the new earl did his best during the journey to prepare his wife for her new position by telling her all he possibly could about its responsibilities and the circumstances of unwonted pomp that would surround it and her and him.

However, this is sure: they left Bolas, never to return to it. The Burleigh House of Shropshire was sold, and that, with the little Henry in the Bolas churchyard, are the sole remaining incontestable witnesses in the district to the *mésalliance* upon which the Shropshire villagers looked at first with apathy and later with reverent admiration. There is talk of a chair from their simple home still preserved at Meeson Hall, in the neighbourhood. It cannot be a relic worth journeying far to see, even if its pedigree is beyond suspicion. A tombstone, with the date of little Henry Jones's death upon it, would be far more gratifying. But that is wanting. The vault in which the child lies, with his Bolas grandfather and grandmother and old Thomas Hoggins's brother, is a level one, with nothing but grass over it. The ordinary Bolas villager could not even indicate its whereabouts. This being so,

I was fortunate to meet a man who had actually looked into it and seen the little coffin containing the dust of the babe who, with better luck, would have grown into the second Marquis of Exeter. 'It was more nor twelve years ago,' said the man, 'and the sexton he were digging a grave when he struck his pick through a brick wall under the ground. Him and me talked it over and agreed to come and see what it meant when the folks were gone to bed. We got a candle when it was dark, and dropped into the grave and made the hole bigger, till we could see right into the vault; and there they was, as plain as could be, the Hogginses' names and all. They was as sound as if they hadn't been there more than a year, and the child's coffin too, with its name on it. And afterwards we stopped it up again, and no one has ever meddled with it since.' This same villager, having added other circumstantial details, signified his wonder that the Marquises of Exeter liked to leave the vault thus undignified. Even the smallest headstone would be better than none. Then the sentimental visitor to Bolas would have a little something upon which to build airy visions and conjectures. The vault lies a few yards from the south-west corner of the church. This, for the visitor's benefit, may at least be told at large.

One more glance, in conclusion, at Sir Thomas Lawrence's portrait of Sarah Hoggins, in the billiard-room at Burleigh House. It does one good to look at her. No woman could appear happier and more in harmony with her surroundings. Her husband's arm is round her shoulder as he stands to her right—a solid, reputable and worthy Englishman to the eye. Their little girl, Sophia (born at Bolas in 1792), leans against her mother's knee, laughing, with the countess's hands clasped about her. Unless Lawrence lied with his pencil and pigments, Sarah Hoggins was assuredly a girl fit to wear a coronet. Yet even about this painting the many-voiced critics differ strangely. Some one who ought to have known much better says of it: 'Her ladyship's portrait gives the spectator the idea of a buxom, ruddy-faced woman, stout and well proportioned, just the last woman whom I should have supposed to have died of consumption; indeed, her physique would rather indicate fever or apoplexy as the disease which would terminate her life.' This is a specimen of the nonsense written by the commentators on the Bolas romance. The writer cannot have seen the picture. That is the most charitable excuse for him and his libel.

Lord Tennyson as biographer and Lord Tennyson as poet are two different personages. The latter is not accountable for the errors of the former. It is therefore no reproach to his verse that in it he favours what may be called the consumptive legend of the countess's death :

So she drooped and drooped before him,
Fading slowly from his side ;
Three fair children first she bore him,
Then before her time she died.

On the 1st of January, 1797, she gave birth to her *fourth* child, Thomas. Seventeen days later she died, when only twenty-five. Seventy-six years afterwards this child, Lord Thomas Cecil, also died, and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery. The Cottage Countess, as they call her at Stamford, probably died, not of a decline, but of a malady incidental to her confinement.

ACCIDENTS TO BIRDS.

Few people, except those who make a special study of our feathered folks, would ever dream of the numberless curious accidents to which they are liable.

A covey of partridges will, for some unexplained reason, upon occasion, fly right out to sea, and alight on the waves with as little apparent concern as they would in a turnip-field, though every single bird amongst them is certain to perish by drowning.

It seems almost incredible that a bird should break its wing in mid-air by the mere exertion of flight; yet four such accidents have been reported within the last two or three years. A gentleman, whilst out quail-shooting near the Pyramids, flushed an owl, and mechanically raised his gun, without any intention of firing, when, to his utter surprise, the bird twisted in its flight and fell to the ground as if shot. On examination, the astonished sportsman discovered that the poor owl had broken its wing. Although no such accident has ever come within my own experience, I have more than once whilst out shooting seen a bird fly for upwards of a hundred yards before the fractured bone of a broken wing had become displaced. An amusing incident once happened to an old shepherd with the spirit of the poacher strong within him. He saw a covey of partridges coming along, and, having a sudden watering of the mouth, lifted his walking-stick and took deliberate aim at one of the birds. To his utter bewilderment, it fell in the most orthodox fashion, and, after rolling over, began to run as a winged partridge only knows how. It had just come from a battue, where its wing-bone had been splintered by a stray corn of shot.

It may seem strange and paradoxical to talk about birds getting shot by accident; nevertheless, such a thing often happens. I was once out grouse-shooting with a party of gentlemen in Yorkshire, and remember one 'gun' having his solitary chance during a beat spoilt. A bird passed him about forty yards away, and, taking aim, he fired; but at the instant he did so another grouse passed close to the muzzle of his weapon, received the whole of the charge, and was in consequence literally blown to atoms. My father once took aim at one of three driven grouse coming towards him on a strong wind, and at the instant he

pulled the trigger the birds suddenly deviated from their course, and, getting into line, all three fell dead. Booth mentions once shooting at a small flock of common pochards, when, through the charge hanging fire, a very rare specimen had time to fly into the line of shot, and was, in consequence of the accident, added to the great collector's famous museum at Brighton.

The great impetuosity of the flight of many birds often proves a source of danger, and after a dark, misty night I have picked up golden plover and grouse that had dashed themselves to pieces against stone walls. Some idea of the terrific force with which a bird passes through the air may be gathered from the fact that a short while back a common curlew flew right through a piece of plate glass a quarter of an inch thick at Turnberry Lighthouse, Ayrshire. When migratory birds get lost during dark, misty nights they clamour round our lighthouses and lightships in such vast numbers that their white breasts in the rays of light present an appearance very similar to that of a heavy snowstorm. As many as eleven hundred and sixty are calculated to have been killed at one lightship alone in a single night by dashing themselves against the lantern. Upon such occasions the keepers are obliged to close every door and window in order to prevent the pressing throng of winged travellers from gaining admission and knocking over or otherwise extinguishing every exposed light in the place.

Great numbers of birds are killed every year by flying against telegraph wires, which prove particularly dangerous when running across parts of grouse moors or some migratory track at a point where the wayfarers arrive in a tired and worn-out condition.

Although swallows are such wonderfully quick-sighted birds, and can change the direction of their flight with amazing rapidity and ease, it occasionally happens that they either do not perceive the danger lying in their path or are not quick enough to avert it, for I have once or twice, whilst fly-fishing for trout, accidentally knocked down and stunned a swallow. Several instances have also been recorded of the poor bird being struck and killed by golf-balls, and in one case at least even by a cricket-ball. Petrels and other sea-birds have been known to collide whilst in mid-air and drop into passing boats. Wild duck are occasionally picked up on board ships that have been lying at anchor all night in some of our large rivers and estuaries. They strike the rigging or funnels during their nocturnal flights, and as

many as five were found one morning on the deck of a vessel lying at the mouth of the Thames.

Very few birds ever learn the nature of glass, and it is almost a common thing for pheasants to dash through the windows of country houses, misled either by a large mirror or another window on the opposite side of the room. Many smaller birds, including the gay-coloured kingfisher and the sober thrush, are deceived by such illusory conditions, and come to an untimely end through endeavouring to take a short cut. A friend of mine once witnessed a covey of sixteen partridges try conclusions with an express train in Lincolnshire, and afterwards picked up eleven of them dead by the 'four-foot' way.

If the little whitethroats happen to cross the Channel on their spring migration whilst there is any 'sea on' (to use a nautical phrase), they fly so low that many of them are knocked down by the scudding spray and perish.

Instances of eagles being drowned by striking their talons deep into the backs of salmon and other large fish, and being unable to disengage themselves, are said to have occurred. There are many wonderful eagle stories with very little truth in them; however, there does not appear to be any reasonable room for doubting the one, recorded by many of the older naturalists, of a bird stooping at a large salmon which was crossing the ford of a Scottish river, and being secured along with its prey by a shepherd.

Yarrell mentions a very curious accident which once befel a heron. The bird struck its long, spear-like beak through the head of an eel by way of the eyes, and being unable to detach itself from its prey, the latter coiled its long body tightly round the neck of the bird and strangled it to death.

A case was recently reported in the *Field* newspaper of two male herons having been found dead together. They had evidently been engaged in mortal combat, when one had managed to drive his beak so thoroughly through the muscles of the other's thigh as to be unable to extricate it, and both had died of starvation.

Many strange accidents have occurred to birds whilst feeding. An Irish naturalist once observed a dunlin behaving very curiously on the sea shore. The bird rose in the air and flew for a short distance, then alighted and shook its head violently in a vain endeavour to detach a round lump observable upon its bill. The

encumbrance proved to be a cockle which the dunlin had found open, and, in innocently attempting to negotiate, had been trapped by it. This kind of bivalve accomplishment no less an authority than Mr. Tegetmayer declares to be not at all uncommon on our shores. A Whitstable cockle recently bore testimony to the veteran naturalist's assertion by capturing a green linnet by one of its toes.

A poor little chaffinch was found dead in the neighbourhood of Epsom a short time ago with its lower mandible firmly embedded in the shell of a beech-nut, that had become so inextricably fixed that the bird had died from starvation. A hen pheasant was not long since observed by a sportsman flying round and round in the most unaccountable fashion, and on being shot was discovered to have a large oak-leaf impaled upon its beak so as to completely obscure its vision.

Hérons sometimes choke themselves by attempting to swallow large trout, how large may be judged to some extent from the fact that I recently dissected a bird of this species in whose maw was a large water rat in a perfect state of preservation. An eider duck has been killed through attempting to swallow a toad, and a bullhead or 'miller's thumb' has proved too much for a water rail, a little grebe, and a kingfisher. A member of the last-named species was discovered a season or two back in a Cambridgeshire ditch by some sportsmen, unable to fly except for a short distance, and upon being caught and examined it was found that the bird had a young pike protruding from its gullet. As soon as the fish, which measured no less than four and three-quarter inches, was removed, the kingfisher flew away apparently none the worse for its experience.

Birds that employ hair in the building of their nests sometimes come to grief by hanging, but I should say very seldom indeed in the following singular manner. A gentleman who had a number of colts upon his farm one day noticed a small bird entangled in the long hair of the tail of one of them. The little creature had evidently been in search of material wherewith to line its nest, and by some unaccountable accident had become ensnared in the unkempt hair of the colt's tail. Cases of birds getting their feet entangled in bits of yarn or string are not at all uncommon, especially in the breeding season, and whenever the victim of this kind of mishap happens to get the impediment fastened in a tree or amongst stones, death is pretty sure to be the result unless prompt human aid is forthcoming. In the spring

of the year, as everybody knows, the dead leaves of pampas grass fall to the ground and curl up like the shavings from a carpenter's bench. A *Field* correspondent mentions finding a poor robin which had accidentally got one of these pieces coiled round its neck so tightly that it was unable to feed, and died of starvation.

Booth describes a very peculiar accident to a kingfisher, thus: 'Whilst snipe-shooting one winter round Hickling Broad in Norfolk, I noticed some small object splashing in the water at the side of the dyke, and on proceeding to the spot I discovered an unfortunate kingfisher that had come to grief in a rather singular manner. The bird had evidently at some former time been struck by a shot which had passed through the upper mandible. This wound was quite healed up, but a small piece of the horny substance of the beak had been splintered, and into the crack produced by the fracture two or three of the fine fibres which form part of the flowers or seeds of the reed were so firmly fixed that the bird was held fast. It must have been flying up the dyke and brushing too closely to the reeds that grow on the banks to have been caught in the manner described.'

It sounds strange to talk of a duck drowning; nevertheless, I have witnessed such an accident in a rough mountain torrent, and it is a well-known fact that many sea birds are drowned and washed ashore during storms. A correspondent, writing from Cornwall to a contemporary, says: 'A very singular spectacle was witnessed not long ago at Lennon Cove. A very heavy sea was running from the E.S.E., and for some days there had been many hundreds of gannets fishing in the bay, and on the afternoon of [a given date], owing to there being no wind, the breakers rolled them in on to the shore by hundreds, some dead, but a great many alive. Whitesand Bay was soon a scene of animation, as the fishermen caught a great many, one man getting a cart-load. Nobody here remembers such a thing before.' It is highly probable that such an accident had hardly ever occurred before, because it is a well-known fact that gannets enjoy a wonderful immunity from danger, as the same birds have been known to return to their breeding stations for forty years in unbroken succession.

The recuperative power of birds after being maimed by shot, traps, and violent accidents is wonderful. I have several times seen grouse badly crippled yet living and apparently enjoying good health; and there is on record a case of a partridge walking

about and thriving without any feet at all. Pheasants have been found in surprisingly good condition after losing part or all of their beaks by shot or trap, and a landrail is known to have recovered and lived after having one of its wings absolutely torn off by flying against a telegraph wire.

There is a plant growing amongst the mountains of Jamaica enjoying the scientific name of *Uncinia jamaicensis*, the seeds of which are provided with highly specialised elastic hooks which stick to the feathers of any bird happening to touch them. These seeds have to trust almost entirely to this peculiar form of distribution, and the plant grows most abundantly in the track of migratory birds. It sometimes happens that small birds become so completely entangled that they are unable to extricate themselves and die.

Finally it may not be unfitting to glance for a moment at the way in which birds regard accidents to each other. I have seen them so devoted as to try and carry off their dead; and many instances are on record of birds endeavouring to help each other in time of trouble. An observer not long ago reported the fact that he saw a sparrow trying to release another which had become entangled in a piece of horsehair attached to the bough of a tree.

A party of sportsmen out grouse-shooting in Ireland a year or two back, came upon a pair of grouse, and discovered that the male was totally blind of both eyes, and that his mate, a fine bird, evidently ministered to all his wants—leading him about, bringing him food, and keeping close beside him. Such devotion in a bird is, I should say, almost without parallel.

A HYMENEAL FIASCO.

EPISODE I.

A SHORT man, dark of complexion and natty of dress, was showing a couple of country cousins the various deficiencies in the Royal Academy, and endeavouring to tone down their too pronounced admiration by continually impressing on them that this was 'the worst show he'd ever seen.' His charges were not remarkably well-dressed, and their features were what charitable people call 'plain'; and he looked, as he felt, not at all pleased with his occupation. He was a regular 'man-about-town' was Jack Kynaston; he knew everybody, and everybody knew him. But just now his eye-glass seemed remarkably ineffectual; he scarcely recognised a soul. The human optic is subject to such attacks sometimes, but it can form no defence against impetuous friends who come up suddenly from behind and hit you a greeting on the back.

By such a one was Mr. Kynaston's reserve broken. He was a tall person, slightly moustached and considerably sun-browned, looking as if he had recently spent a considerable part of his time out of doors.

'I say, what do you think?' he asked.

'Can't tell, I'm sure,' replied Mr. Kynaston drily. 'Life's too short for riddles. Besides, I've got them'—indicating the enthusiastic relatives by a backward nod—'to look after.'

'Well, I'm engaged, that's all!'

'Oh, you are, are you? Well, I thought you'd make a mess of it some day or other. What are—her tangible virtues?'

'Why, of course, you'll only laugh at me for saying it, but she's the sweetest, most——'

'I said "tangible," my friend,' interrupted the other. 'What's the *dot*?'

'Oh, you cold-blooded fish! I don't calculate on a bargain of that sort. I want Ada for herself.'

'Miss Russell, is it, eh? Why didn't you say so before? Well, I suppose you'd like to be congratulated. Ta, ta! can't wait any longer now.'

'But I must see you again. Where will you be to-night?'

'After 1.30 at my own chambers; before that at half a dozen places. Now I must really go. All right; I'll expect you then,' and Mr. Kynaston returned sadly to his charges, and the friend went off beaming in another direction.

'You won't be able to stay much longer,' he said, looking knowingly at his watch, 'if you want to be back at Queen's Gate by four. I don't want to hurry you, of course; still— Oh, very well, then. But I shouldn't go on a 'bus; you'll find a cab outside.' And after some arguments about the various merits and demerits of hansoms and four-wheelers, and the infectious diseases which the latter were so notorious for spreading, a vehicle was finally selected, and in another minute Mr. Kynaston was free and happy again.

He went to the club for a bit; then dressed, dined, and fulfilled some of the 'half a dozen' engagements; and finally, a little after midnight, doffed his *toga virilis* and put on a soft smart blazer, and sat down in an ultra-easy chair in his own chambers to smoke a reflective pipe.

'Ada Russell,' he said, 'you're just two-and-thirty now, and what little power of being in love you ever were mistress of has been most effectually frittered away. You have a heart, I suppose, because modern anatomy teaches that such an apparatus is indispensable; but it is one that merely fulfils the elementary function of pumping-engine. There's just about as much sentiment in you, my lady, as the late Joseph Surface had. You've got a temper that may have been bright once, in the dim ages of the past, but which, through your constantly bringing it out in all sorts of weather, has become very rusty of late—yes, very rusty indeed. And, moreover, it is a notorious fact that you have been openly running after marriageable mankind with such avidity that you have made half a dozen neighbourhoods too sultry for pleasant residence. Moreover, you cannot bear being chaffed, and *badinage* is poor George's forte.

'You've been very good-looking in your time—not that I'm an advocate for "beauty which perisheth," for ugly girls are frequently the pleasantest—and you've got traces of your good looks left still. And you're no pauper, although you are by no means a millionaire. But, despite your seven hundred a year, you've never found a *fiancé* until Master Adney said "Barkis." Men have been attracted for awhile, but you are too transparent. No one was so blind that he couldn't see through you. But now

that you have hooked a fish, you'll take precious good care not to let him go till he's safely landed. So I may as well take the thing philosophically and not jeer at him too much, as in the present state of his feelings George might not take it in good part, and there would possibly be a rupture; the which I would avoid at any cost, for I like the man extremely. In fact, he's my Damon, if I have one. Still, there's not the smallest doubt he's made an egregious ass of himself. Silly fool he was to go yachting with them. I wonder—— Oh, don't trouble to knock!

As Mr. Adney had *not* heralded his entrance with his knuckles, this last remark might perhaps be styled a superfluous pleasantry.

'You're early, my unfortunate friend.'

'Yes, old chap; I've regularly turned over a new leaf in everything since Ada took me, and I'm going to sober down into a respectable member of society. I say, Jack, I'm so awfully happy.'

'Are you?' rejoined Kynaston drily. 'Then that's probably why your tie's not straight.'

'Here, I say, Jack, it is hard luck to humbug a chap like this, particularly as I want to speak seriously to you. Besides, it's quite useless to exercise your poor wit now, because I'm going to get married, whatever you say. You'll be my Best Man, of course?'

'H'm! I rather fail to see the "of course." But, yes, I'll do you that last service; I'll see the last of you; I'll attend your last moments of batchelorhood; I'll administer to you *in extremis*. But on one condition: that you tell me how you proposed. *Parole d'honneur*, I won't give it away.'

'Well,' said the other rather confusedly, 'I don't think I should tell you if I could; but, as it happens, I can't. Honestly, I don't recollect a bit about it.'

'Rather—er—elevated at the time, maybe?'

'No, not altogether that, though I certainly had refreshed my courage just a little; but, you see, it came out—er—sort of—er—spontaneously, don't you know. Mind'—hurriedly—'it was every bit on my side. She didn't run after me at all.'

'Never said she did, did I? Ada Russell never ran after anybody.'

'Now, I say, look here; take care. I won't stand any of that sort of thing.'

'H'm! never saw such a man. You're as touchy as a pro-

fessional agitator. You find a piece of veiled sarcasm in the most simple remarks. George, my boy, the new state of things isn't improving you. Have people been making nasty suggestions, or why is it ?'

'Oh,' replied the other disgustedly, 'everybody puts in some sneering remark. I never knew what a cynical lot you all were before. And all, as far as I can make out, just because she happens to be a day or two my senior. Really there's nothing very curious in it when you come to look at it coolly. Why are men usually older than the girls they marry? Merely custom: no other reason. Well, I have taken upon myself to break through that custom, and the inversion seems the signal for a general roar of smothered laughter.'

'Hard lines, very,' responded Mr. Kynaston, with dubious sympathy. 'Have some whisky or a B. and S. ?'

'No, neither, thanks; I've knocked off my liquor now. But about the wedding. Ada says there's no reason why we should wait, and'—defiantly—'I quite agree with her. So we shall be married at the beginning of August. Ah, sha'n't I be happy then !'

'Where is the interesting ceremony to take place? St. George's, Hanover Square ?'

'Hanover Square! Rather not. Why, their own place down in Cambridgeshire, to be sure. You've been there.'

'Oh yes, I've been there; twice, for that matter, but not lately though.' He was going to add, 'I didn't bite, so they thought it useless to give me another chance,' but judiciously refrained, and kept the piece of pleasantry to himself.

'And I say,' continued the other, following his own thoughts, 'how about settlements and things? Do you know anything about them? I don't.'

'Yes, I can give you a good piece of advice there. Have nothing whatever to do with them yourself. Employ a lawyer, and let your people instruct him. They won't be prejudiced by sentiment, and will look after your interests carefully.'

'But it's her interests I want looking after, and not my own. You can't feel as I do, Jack'—pityingly—'but if you'd ever been in love you'd understand. Why, man, I'll have every penny tied on to that girl if I can, and let her allow me what she thinks fit.'

'You'd sing a different tune in six months' time. No, be persuaded in this. Let your lawyer manage the business part for

you. Why, man, open your eyes and look around you. Nearly every chap that gets married tells the same tale at first; but after a year or so of it, just notice the difference. Of course, you think yours is an exceptional case——'

'I'm sure of it,' with a triumphant smile.

'Yes, of course you are—now. But then you're slightly delirious—a trifle insane, in fact. You're labouring under the worst form of a very common disease, which is notorious for passing away with startling rapidity. And, in fact—— Well, perhaps I am rather irritating. All right, I'll hold my tongue. What, going already? Good-bye, then. See you again soon, I suppose. If not, write and let me hear how things are progressing—that is, if you have time to waste on such an uninteresting person as an old friend who is still practical and unsentimental.'

'Poor chap, poor old George Adney,' he went on to himself, after the object of his soliloquy had departed. 'Yours is a bad case; one of the worst, in fact, that has ever come within the range of my professional experience. If you don't go and live in Tetuan, or Timbuctoo, or Tavistock, or some other equally out-of-the-way place for the next month or so, your miserable life will be a burden to you. Everyone knows what manner of girl the erst-fair Ada is, and everyone will think he has a perfect right to his own special gibe. Nevertheless, you'll be kept up to the collar. There's no getting your heels over the traces now. There's a heavy curb-bit in your mouth, my lad, and an old and careful hand at the reins, not to mention half a dozen cunning relatives, who'll run alongside, and give a hand when it's needed. No more loose-boxes and light work for you, George; no more goodly feeds of oats. The dingy matrimonial four-wheeler will jar your ribs and break your spirit, and even your humble "choppy" and bran will have its powder.'

'Alack, alack! I grieve me much, for verily the name of Adney was very pleasant to me; and now, when that name is to be shared by another, and such another, its charm will be known no more. No longer will it be heard on the lips of the merry, no longer will it be seen in the Belgravian card-basket. The club shall print it no more, and it shall be mentioned with bated breath in the habitation of the single. Lamentation shall be thy portion, my brother George, lamentation for that trouble and woe have found thee, and she who is the cause of thy griefs shall make thy wonted haunts know thee no more.'

Here Mr. Kynaston, probably from lack of ideas, brought this threnody on his friend's social life to an abrupt conclusion, and softly murmuring to himself something about 'thanking his particular planet that he was out of it,' he proceeded to turn off the gas and betake himself to an adjoining apartment, where, in the space of one brief quarter of an hour, he was snoring the happy sleep of untrammelled bachelorhood.

EPISODE I.

Marriage-feasts—wedding-breakfasts, that is—have gone out of fashion in these latter days, and no longer give the youth of the period a joyful opportunity of over-eating and over-drinking, without let or hindrance, or subsequent rebuke. And in their place is substituted a fashionable 'at home' with a view of your own and other people's presents (and the unrestricted opportunity of making comparisons, which are always unfavourable to somebody—self or friends), and a cheap and inexpensive reflection of tea and light comestibles. But the antenuptial 'hop,' 'dance,' 'ball,' or whatever the social position of the contracting parties permits it to be styled, has not yet been ruthlessly shorn away from us; and though it is not *de rigueur*, though it may be freed from the presence of the interesting couple by taking place when the ceremony is past and over, and they are well away on their one calendar month's honeying, or though it is made 'quite a small affair, just intimate friends you know,' still it exists.

Miss Russell's relatives had followed up this honoured custom of rejoicing at 'getting her off their hands—at last,' and the home of her fathers, a decentish country-house in Cambridgeshire, had been turned topsy-turvy with laudable desire to do the thing well. And really, to give them their due, the projectors of this Terpsichorean thanksgiving left nothing undone that was in their power to secure perfection. The folding-doors between drawing-room and study were taken clean away, and the two turned into a howling wilderness, by reason of their furniture being transferred to the coach-house; the floor was washed with milk and rubbed with French chalk till ice was as gravel in comparison; a pianist, a violinist, a flautist, a scraper of the double-bass, and a blower of the brazen cornet were enlisted, all of whom undertook to learn

dance music that had been comparatively unknown, say, twenty years ago; the walls were covered with sconces wherefrom countless candles could shed a pleasing radiance on ball-dress, hair, or black coat; and last, but chiefest, a supper had been made ready that gourmand and gourmet could dream about—for two nights at least.

With one exception, every one seemed happy. Young men in their salad days danced, and perspired, and refreshed, and fairly beamed with delight and champagne-cup; town-maidens, proudly conscious of the superiority of their own draperies, knew the blissful satisfaction of the well-dressed; country-maidens revelling in the clumsy waltz forgot for awhile the dull cares of home; chaperons found their bodily cravings well provided for; non-dancing men discovered cards and other ways to happiness in the billiard-room; and the Bride was in the eighth heaven of delight. I believe in the best regulated communities there are only seven of these last abodes of bliss; but on the evening I speak of, Miss Adeline Russell found herself in undefinable raptures far beyond this often-explored limit. The quest of her life had been crowned with success. She had got—a hubby. As good as got, that is; for there was no fear of his breaking adrift now. He was drawn into the shallows; the gaff was in him; to-morrow would see him safely ensconced in the matrimonial creel.

And this discontented person, this skeleton at the otherwise bone-less feast, who was he, and how dared he bring his grisly presence into such a joyous company? Woe was him, he could not help himself. Of all that were bidden, he had the least opportunity of absenting himself. For he was one-half of the pivot round which the whole revolved. Alas and alack-a-day! misery and crying shame, this person was no other than the Bridegroom elect, that same George Adney who so short a time ago had blissfully eulogised his coming happiness.

'I say, old man,' said his *fidus Achates*, Mr. Kynaston, bustling up to him, *en route* for his next partner, 'whatever's up? You look like a diner-out who has forgotten his home address. Got hold of a tip for squaring the circle and getting an F.R.S., is it, or merely indigestion? Look here'—linking arms—'come into the billiard-room for a minute and I'll prescribe for you.'

Adney did as he was requested, and, after disposing of a stiff tumbler of whisky and potash at a single gulp, announced that he felt 'rather queer somehow.'

'Ball-room's like an oven. Been dancing all the time, too, haven't you? Tell your next partner it's much better fun sitting out in the garden. There's the music on again, come along.'

'No, I shall stay here, Jack.'

'Humbug, my dear chap. Remember you can't do as you like just now. You are a public man at present, and must let your own inclinations go to the wall for awhile. Who's the partner? Why, man, you're half-dazed; let me have that programme. Whew, 'A. R.!' You mustn't keep her waiting; whatever are you thinking about? There now, pull yourself together.'

'Deuced odd,' soliloquised Mr. Kynaston a minute later, as, with his hands in his pockets, he anxiously watched his friend, to the utter disregard of his own immediate duty. 'Deuced odd. He isn't screwed, although he sucked down that liquor like a brewer's drayman, but his wits have gone wool-gathering somewhere. Overdose of bliss perhaps; always best to water your drinks if they are too strong.' And then he indulged in a sarcastic grin and went and told his partner in an injured tone that he had been 'looking for her everywhere.'

'Why, you were staring after Mr. Adney just a moment ago,' the damsel remarked bluntly, and then, being more interested in that topic than in the slight she had received, she followed it up. 'Doesn't he seem very strange to-night?' she inquired, 'or is that his usual manner? Really one would never guess, to look at him, that he and his partner were going to be married and off on a honeymoon before this time to-morrow.'

'Oh, that's George's usual expression of face when he's thoroughly enjoying himself. It is rather quaint perhaps, but one quite expects it when one knows him. His father was that way too; runs in the family, I suppose, like gout and livers. Shall we go and have an ice? This room would melt a heart of stone.'

An hour or so later Mr. Kynaston was gradually performing his *toilette de lit*, and talking to Adney, who was stretched out at full length on the bed. 'Can't make you out anyhow,' he was telling him. 'Here you say there's nothing whatever the matter with you, barring a headache, which shouldn't count; and with my own eyes I've seen you down below wearing a face that would frighten a statue. You've been stalking through the people with a heavy-tragedy air, and an eighteen carat Adelphi scowl, or propping up a wall and looking as if you wished you were dead; or

else dancing like an automaton and conversing like a duffer. If this is what you call being ecstatically happy, well, I'm going in for profound misery, after the old enjoyable fashion. Come, I say now, clear out and get into bed, and let me do ditto. We've got a hard day before us.'

'Jack.'

'Hullo.'

'I don't want to get married.'

'P-h-e-w'—a low whistled scale, drawn out as long as one fit of breath would sustain it, speaking libraries in its expressiveness.

'I've clean fuked it.'

'Too late now.'

'Yes'—with a sigh, brimming with resignation—'it's too late now.'

It was on the tip of Mr. Kynaston's tongue to repeat some seldom-used formula of the 'I told you so' species, but he forbore, and murmured sympathetically 'Poor old man!'

'I shall have an awful life of it, an awful life, Jack; she's let me see that already. They always say "fools venture where angels fear to tread," and that accounts for it, I suppose. If I'd been anything short of an abject idiot I might have known that all those other fellows who prospected and then ran away had reason for their unfaithfulness. But now I've pushed my stupid head into a collar which will always jar, and never wear out.'

'Why the devil didn't you quarrel with her?' asked the other irritably. This hopeless resignation annoyed him.

'Because she wouldn't let me, Jack. I tried to, tried hard—you may bet your life on that. But she was all sugar and honey, and smoothed me down into peaceful subjection. Besides——'

'Make a bolt of it.'

'Make a bolt of it!' exclaimed he on the bed, rising from his recumbent posture, and fairly gasping with astonishment. 'Why, I've never had the least chance.'

'Do it now, man. Make a bold dash for liberty before it's too late. The emphatic she is peacefully slumbering the sleep of the successful in her own mansion a mile off, and there are no sentries here. Slip off that war-paint, don the ordinary tweeds of every day tourist life, pack that smaller portmanteau with pyjamas and a toothbrush, get off by the first train that leaves the station, and then make for the wilds of—oh, anywhere.'

'By Jove, I've a good mind to do it.'

'You must speak now, my son, or for ever hold your peace. The gaol door's open. Go back to your cell, and sleep the sleep of the just and the penitent, and you'll be hanged—married that is—in the morning as sure as you are scratching your head now. (Don't do it, please, it reminds one of the Zoo.) Slip off your handcuffs, which are quite loose—condemned men are always treated well at the last moment—pass the snoring warders, regain once more the haunts of crime, and pick up afresh the thread of your happy sinful life where you laid it down. Just think of it now! You'll be able to come and go when and where you please, with no one to question; to smoke as much as you like; to drink when you are athirst; and to be a jolly bachelor till such time comes when you meet a really nice girl—and I'm quite willing to admit that there are such to be had—and then change your life perhaps, but only to improve it. Come along now, don't hesitate any longer.'

'Here, go over into my room with me and just help pack some things, and I'll change and be off at once.'

'I'm more than half inclined to go with you. You won't need these patent leather boots?'

'No; leave the boots behind. You can send them on with the rest of the things afterwards. But I say, Jack'—seriously—'you mustn't skedaddle too. You must stay behind to explain things, don't you see?'

'No,' said Mr. Kynaston, rather ruefully, 'I can't say I do see. Because it strikes me rather forcibly that several people will feel at liberty to be excessively indignant in a few hours time, and the odds are that I shall strike them as being a very convenient scapegoat; or, in plainer English, probably some angry person will want to hit me, and then there will be a vulgar brawl.'

'Oh no, there won't, Jack.'

'Oh, but yes there will, my young friend. I don't wish to make you conceited by fulsome flattery—have you got a key to this, or will the strap be enough?—but just at the present time you are a person of some note, the lion of the day in fact; and when you are not producible to perform in the show as per advertisement, I, your keeper, shall be called seriously to account. No, now shut up—don't start being exceedingly grateful and thanking me profusely. Got plenty of 'baccy? And matches?'

Good-bye, then, and good luck to you. By the way—send me a wire to the Cambridge Post Office to say where you are.’

And in two minutes more the Bridegroom (that was to be) had got clear of the house.

EPISODE III.

When his co-conspirator had fairly departed, Mr. Kynaston returned to his own room, and, after lighting a pipe, stretched himself comfortably on the top of his bed. The language of his thoughts was sometimes perplexed, sometimes derisive, sometimes a trifle sympathetic, and frequently ‘painful and free.’ His window faced east, and the full rays of the rising sun passed in with remorseless brilliance, and the increasing noises without, as well as his watch, told him that the morning was rapidly advancing.

‘I’ve a precious good mind to make myself scarce too,’ he soliloquised. ‘The happy man will be missed by eight, or eight-thirty at the latest, and then, won’t there be a jolly row! Every one will want to vent angry feelings on someone else. The Bride-elect, who will have no chance of attempting to look younger than she really is, by the aid of girlish white dress and orange blossom; her people, whose new hopes are rudely dashed away for ever; the good folks of the house I’m staying in now, at the thoughts of being unavoidably mixed up in an unpleasant scandal; the bridesmaids, whose new dresses will receive no public exhibition; the parson who will pocket no fee, and who will therefore think the proceedings “simply disgraceful”; and in fact every soul who was to have had the least connection with the marriage will look out for a scapegoat to bear the sins of the departed one, and who such a suitable person as myself? They’ll never believe that he has simply “disappeared mysteriously”—that’s too much like fiction for fact. And they’ll never imagine that he has levanted on his own responsibility. They are bound to give me the credit of persuading him, because’—with a grin—‘some of my little sentiments with regard to matrimony in the abstract are pretty tolerably well known. Yes, really’—and here he got up and looked pensively at a pile of folded clothes on a chair—‘really, I think I’d better forego the formality of leave-taking, and start for the station before it gets any later. It’s rather a felonious sort of action, I suppose, running away with oneself on an occasion like

this, but it isn't a case they could get a magistrate's warrant out for.'

And then a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and smiling a sweet smile of resignation, Mr. Kynaston turned him again to the bed, and lifting the clothes, slumbered the sleep of the embarrassed in the space of less than two minutes.

At eight o'clock, or a little before, a man came into the room to call him, and fill his bath, and get things ready generally; and seeing that the fellow hung about as if he wanted to say something, Kynaston, with a cold smile, asked him what it was.

'Oh, nothing, sir; only Mr. Hadney's hup and hout already.' He seemed to find this such a good joke that he laughed knowingly.

Mr. Kynaston joined in his hilarity, and remarked, 'He isn't much accustomed to getting married, you see, and they're all a little excited the first time or two. You were yourself, I've no doubt, Trellers?'

'Only tried it once, sir, so far,' said Trellers, with an appreciative grin; 'but the larst gennlem'n as we married 'ere was took exactly the same way. Hanythink more as I can do for you, sir? Cigarette, sir, or a brandy and soda?'

'No, thanks; I can get along now. Are the others stirring yet?'

'Most of 'em isn't, sir.'

'H'm! well then, I think I'll indulge myself half an hour longer, as Mr. Adney is up to see to anything that wants looking after. Just take care I don't overrun that though.'

With an obedient 'Yessir' the man left the room, and Mr. Kynaston congratulated himself on having got round the first corner. However, before the half hour had elapsed, another visitor presented himself, this time his host, a fussy country squire of about fifty.

'Hullo! not stirring yet?' he said. 'Humph, you are taking it coolly enough, any way. Why, Adney was up and out long ago.'

'I'm only dealing the cards this game. He's playing high.'

'Ho, ho, ho,' laughed the Squire in stentorian tones. 'Don't you crow too loudly though. Your turn will come some day. Where's he gone to?'

'Can't tell, I'm sure; he hasn't been in here since I woke up. Walked over to the Russells' perhaps, to indulge in one last

surreptitious sigh under a certain window we wot of, before the indifference of possession makes such proceedings uninteresting. Eh, Squire?’

‘Ha, ha, ha!’

‘E—h, Squire? We know, don’t we?’

‘Ha, ha, ha! you young dog. Now get up.’ And he, too, left, and once more did the wily Mr. Kynaston chuckle to himself. Then Trellers came in again, this time with a look of concern on his face.

‘Mr. Hadney ’e’s nowheres about, sir, as I can find, an’ ’is room it’s all of a muddle. I didn’t rightly notice it when I was hin afore, but ’is small black portmantle’s gawn, sir, an’ some of ’is things too, an’ the rest is strawn ’ere, there, and heverywheres.’

‘What’s he got on?’

‘Well, I couldn’t rightly tell; but I should say one of ’is tweed soots, sir. There’s them nice noo lavender bags just chucked on the bed no’ow, an’ the white weskit as ’e was agoing to wear, lying with a dirty boot plump on its stummick.’

‘Seems odd,’ said Mr. Kynaston meditatively. ‘Look here, you go and hunt him up, and tell him he’ll be late if he doesn’t take care; and I’ll dress.’

The plot was thickening.

Next, one of the other guests staying in the house came in just as the Best Man was getting into his collar.

‘Where’s George?’ he asked. ‘He’s up and out, and no one seems to know where he’s got to.’

‘So about six people have told me already,’ remarked Mr. Kynaston, knotting his tie with great care and deliberation. ‘Idiot hasn’t even got into his wedding garments yet, they say. He’ll be late to a dead certainty if we don’t take care. You go and hunt him up, there’s a good fellow. I’ll be down directly. Bother! There, I shall have to tie that again! Oh, I am going to enjoy myself,’ he added, when this last visitor had made his exit. Ten minutes later he slid into an unoccupied seat at the breakfast table, and after stating that he would have ‘coffee,’ he ran his eye over the viands, and then deigned to reply, in answer to many inquiries, that he hadn’t seen Adney yet since he woke, but that he would be bound to turn up in a minute or so now.

However, as, needless to remark, Mr. Adney did not put in an appearance before the Best Man had finished his leisurely meal,

he did begin to feign some anxiety, and with a few cutting epithets at the absent one's carelessness, set off in person to search for him. Others, half-laughing, half-serious, departed on the same errand; but one by one they returned with faces considerably elongated. They had looked high, they had looked low; they had searched the house, they had scoured the grounds; one had even been across to the Russells, and interviewed both butler and coachman; but all without success, and they were unanimous in concurring that 'it' (to wit, the situation) 'was the very devil.'

'He was awfully queer last night,' some one remembered.

'Told me to "go to thingummy" when I asked him if he didn't feel blissful,' said another with a dubious smirk.

'He was drinking like a fish,' remarked a third, whose chronic thirst made him able to render a pretty correct tale of those who patronise the wine-pots.

'He scarcely danced at all,' observed a youth who had recently bought his first dress-coat, and thought dancing the only thing one went to dances for.

And then they all applied to Kynaston to know where on earth the Bridegroom had got to.

'How the deuce should I know any more than you do?' inquired the Best Man irritably. 'I saw he was behaving like a maniac last night, just the same as you did; and although at first I thought it was only natural excitement, I spoke to him about it half a dozen times. He said he was feeling headachey and queer, that was all; and then, if you noticed, he went to bed rather early. I saw him again upstairs before turning in, and he was just the same then.'

'What did he say?' asked half a dozen voices.

'Oh, nothing much, except that he wished he were well over to-morrow—meaning to-day, that is.'

This remark caused a slight laugh among two or three of the younger auditors—inexperienced youths still in the enjoyment of their salad days—but the solemn look of the others quickly suppressed it.

'Well,' said the Squire, in the tones of a man who means what he says, 'something must be done, that's very certain.' And no one ventured to gainsay him. 'It's half-past nine now'—he noted the fact on his watch, and confirmed it from the clock on the mantelshelf—'half-past nine, and he isn't here.'

'No,' assented some one after a moment's thought, 'he isn't.' And then everybody waited for someone else to make a further suggestion.

'Half-past nine, and he isn't here,' the Squire repeated authoritatively, although no one had contradicted him. 'Something must be done.' And then he added, 'Really it is very annoying;' but whether he referred to the disagreeable necessity of doing 'something' or to the vexing absence of Mr. Adney, did not appear.

As further search appeared useless, the group still sat or sauntered about the room. Conversation flagged and languished, and the clock on the mantelpiece had enough glances cast at it to imperil the glass. Slowly the hands crept round, so slowly in fact that one might almost have imagined that the malignant spirit who had evidently taken charge of the day had, as a refinement of cruelty, lengthened the pendulum by a good couple of inches; but still, surely, they crept on, till at five minutes to the hour the premonitory 'whirr' to ten o'clock made itself clearly heard above the almost perfect silence.

Once more the Squire, who had been pacing about like a cat in a warm oven, lifted up his voice.

'Those people at the Russells will be starting off to church directly,' he said, 'and it will never do to have them there if our man does not come up to time. They must be told to wait till we send 'em word. You'd better go, Kynaston.'

'Thanks,' remarked that person drily, but without moving from his seat. 'Thanks, but I'd rather stay where I am, if it's all the same to you. Some people have a weakness for killing or torturing a herald who brings bad news, and I'm not greedy for posthumous glory. Send a servant with a note.'

'Nonsense!' exclaimed the Squire angrily; he was glad for an opportunity to flare out at some one. 'Nonsense! you are the proper man, of course. Why, I'd go myself in a minute if I thought it my duty. But it isn't; it's yours. It will be a very unpleasant business, as you say, but they can't hold you responsible, or'—darkly—'at any rate, they won't.'

'Then do you believe I know where Adney is?' said Mr. Kynaston, getting up and looking his host squarely in the face.

'Oh, no, no, no! nothing of the kind. There, don't fly into a rage with me, my good fellow; I'm so upset I hardly know what I'm saying. Dear, dear, I wouldn't have had this happen for fifty

pounds ; those damned papers will get hold of it and laugh over our names in every Radical hole in England. Come now, do go, Jack, and tell them to wait a little. Perhaps he'll turn up yet, and we can send after you before you get to the house.'

But, needless to remark, Mr. Kynaston was not stopped on his road, although, by going slowly, he gave pursuers every chance ; and with no very pleasant feelings he asked for 'Mr. Russell,' the expectant Bride's brother. He told his tale as tersely and clearly as he could, and then checked an abusive outburst on the angered relative's part by saying, 'Now, look here, I won't stand it. The poor chap may have been murdered for anything you know.'

But the fair Ada, to whom the news was quickly imparted, was not so easily silenced. She burst with such a fury of rage into the room where Mr. Kynaston was standing, that she made her bridal attire all awry, and transfigured the smiling face (which she usually showed to eligible men) to one that would have made the most amorous swear to eternal celibacy.

'It's a vile conspiracy !' she screamed ; 'a scheme to get him away from me ; a dastardly plot to cover me with shame ; and you, you are at the bottom of it !'

Mr. Kynaston wisely retired behind a sofa, to secure retreat from a personal attack, which seemed imminent, and then did the worst thing he possibly could do under the circumstances. He advised her to keep calm.

'Keep calm !' she shrieked, in such an ecstasy of rage that the words would hardly come forth. 'Keep calm, when I've been made ridiculous like this ; when I've been put in a position that the whole county will laugh at and gloat over. No'—in answer to a suggestion—'he's not drowned, or murdered, or done anything to. He has simply run away, mean-spirited cur that he is, and I'—with a wild laugh, and a clutch at her head which brought veil and a beauteous switch of hair away at one fell swoop—'I am left here alone, with a miserable brute of a brother who doesn't even offer to kill anyone.'

And then she became so hysterical, and began making such awkward confessions, that the Best Man thought the most charitable thing he could do would be to remove himself from the chance of listening. And so he made his exit, and in a couple of hours more was on the railway.

EPISODE IV.

Mr. Kynaston was well on his road for King's Cross before it struck him that there was probably a telegram awaiting him at the Cambridge post-office; and whilst cogitating as to what he had best do in regard to it, the train drew well into the murky suburbs of the metropolis. So, thinking it was too late that day to beat up his unfortunate friend's retreat, he journeyed on tranquilly to the terminus, drove to his rooms, and conned over the events of the day in solitude. Being very tired, almost worn out in fact, he turned in before eleven; and awaking distinctly refreshed the next morning, he despatched a telegram or two, packed a large Gladstone bag with great care and discrimination to excessive corpulence, and then drove to Liverpool Street. A little over an hour later he was on the 'longest platform in creation'—to wit, that of Cambridge—and shortly afterwards driving down St. Andrew's Street at a most reckless pace in a hansom. The undergraduate likes pace, and cabby consequently humours him.

'Yes, there was a telegram for "Kynaston" addressed to the office;' and its contents caused the reader to send off a return message, and then re-enter his conveyance with the laconic instruction of 'Hoop' to his Jehu. Arrived at that hostelry, he told the man to 'wait,' and then went within and ordered some liquid refreshment and the time-table; the result being that he was very quickly back at the station and *en route* for Ely. Arrived there, he crossed over the line, and after a twenty-minutes wait, met the runaway Bridegroom, who emerged from the Lynn train.

They met with a grin on both sides, and Adney announced that he had been *en cache* at Hilgay Fen. He said it was quiet, out of the way, and not likely to be visited by anyone he didn't want to meet.

'And what do you propose to do now?'

'Go abroad till this blows over. Come with me.'

'Can't. I'm off north now, to join Currie's yacht at Crinan.'

'He asked me.'

'Yes, and you refused, thinking to be otherwise occupied. But I wired to him yesterday that you had changed your mind,

and would come along with me. You can have your sea-kit sent on to Oban.'

'Jack, you're a good fellow.'

'Of course I am. Here! hi! porter! take those two portmantaus across.'

Ten minutes later the train for the north came in, and whilst Kynaston was securing a couple of seats—the carriages were rather crowded—Adney, who was a trifle fussy about such matters, stayed by the van to see that the baggage he was interested in was not left on the platform. The train was a good deal behind time, and therefore the stop was curtailed as much as possible, which, of course, made the crowd of property-owners round the luggage-van a more confused one than usual.

Kynaston was watching it from a distance. He had his head out of the doorway with the double purpose of dissuading any stranger from coming in, and of showing his friend where he was. Most of the ceremony had been gone through; the baggage that was staying behind was being wheeled off by the porters; that which was going on was nearly all in the van. The guard was shutting one of his doors, and taking in one of Adney's portmantaus as he did so. The other package was being held up to him, when suddenly its holder dropped it as if the handle had become red-hot. A voice called his name—a female voice. The guard said, 'Now, sir, get in,' and blew his whistle. The female voice said, 'Oh, George!' a second time, and the train began to move, and finally—Mr. Adney was left on Ely platform with Miss Adeline Russell.

EPISODE V.

A cutter yacht of some eighteen or twenty tons burden was at anchor in Port Ramsay, which is a little-visited natural harbour at the northern end of the island of Lismore, N.B. Seated on her deck was an individual dressed in the easy costume of turned-up flannel trousers and unbuttoned flannel shirt. He wore a glass in one eye, had a short pipe in his mouth, and was peeling potatoes with the aid of a rusted clasp-knife. The great salt sea was his wash-bowl, and when he succeeded in skinning one of the tubers without letting it slip out of his fingers overboard—which happened to at least one out of three—he placed it in a

canvas bucket which stood on the deck beside him, and after taking a look at the mouth of the harbour, where apparently someone was expected, he selected another potato from a brown paper bag which was near the bucket, and resumed his occupation. At last, when nearly all the contents of the bag had passed to the bucket, save those which were securely resting beneath the cutter's keel, a small boat shot round the rock at the harbour's entrance, and a minute afterwards ran up alongside.

'Wire for you, Jack,' said one of the men in her. 'Been forwarded from Oban.'

Kynaston took the yellow envelope, tore it, read the enclosure, and removed his pipe to execute a good sigh. Then he said, 'Alas, poor Adney!'

'What's the matter?' asked one of the others.

For reply Kynaston handed over the telegram. It was dated two days before, and signed 'Adney.'

It said:

'She married me this morning.'

KASHMIR.

ANYONE who has read Moore's delightful 'Lalla Rookh' will feel convinced that it is unnecessary to visit a country in order to know all about it. How Moore acquired so much knowledge of Kashmir at a time when other people knew nothing of it I cannot say, unless, indeed, he was in league with some of those Mahatmas who infest Thibet and who might be supposed to stroll along the Himalaya to Kashmir now and then for a change. However that may be, it is certain that Moore made very few mistakes. Lalla Rookh the beautiful and amorous, Fadladin the pompous and ridiculous, have joined the immortals, but the mountain peaks, the tiny islets in the lakes, the wilderness of fruit and flowers, and the vast forests are all unchanged and testify to this day to the accuracy of his information.

The entrancing beauty of many parts of Kashmir cannot, I think, be exaggerated. It is well that it is so, for some kind of compensation is required to make up for the immense fatigue of getting there, the intense heat and the searching cold, the bad food, the worse servants and the worst possible degree of dirt that have to be endured by the hardy traveller who pushes into Kashmir. The last outpost of civilisation is Murree; once that is left, our traveller has before him 120 miles of road to be covered in a terrible conveyance called a tonga. This is drawn by two vicious, starved, and ragged ponies, each with a conspicuous sore somewhere or other; they are changed every seven or eight miles, but the only perceptible difference is that one pair lie down and refuse to get up, the next do their utmost to kick the tonga to splinters, while the third back steadily to the precipice side of the road, and, while the legs of the traveller who is sitting behind are dangling over space with a clear drop of a thousand feet beneath them, the groom slips off his precarious perch, nimbly twists a rope round the nose of the more obstinate of the two ponies and hauls on to this until the agony forces the poor animal to step forward into safety. I never saw this operation without turning sick, but still it was preferable to the imminent alternative of going over that awful edge. This kind of thing would never be undertaken for pleasure, unless it were suitably balanced in some way. That

balance is found in the scenery. Once get your ponies fairly started and they gallop the whole eight miles without a pause, their object clearly is to get it over as quickly as possible, and until the next stage comes there is leisure to look about. The whole road is one long panorama of ever-shifting beauty; one tires of wondering and exclaiming. The road itself is a miracle of engineering skill, rough as it is. Torrents have been spanned, valleys filled in, tunnels bored, for miles the road has been cut by sheer blasting, as thousands of drill-holes testify. Everywhere it follows roughly the course of the Jhelum, almost always many hundred feet above the river bed, but occasionally dipping down to its level and sometimes crossing it. When this happens a toll of one rupee is demanded. We passed one most horrible-looking bridge, the footway of which was made of short transverse planks laid on ropes and supported entirely by ropes; it looked like a thread above the river, and I was much relieved to find there was no necessity for crossing it. The same coachman took us the whole distance, and he honestly endeavoured to cheer the way by vivid accounts of all the accidents that had taken place on the road for the last ten years. At one place he pointed out a frail-looking bridge, without a parapet and seemingly supported by two or three rotten beams, 'Two years ago,' said our consoler, 'a country cart with a pony and two men went right through that bridge, the planks had decayed, though they looked quite as firm as they do now.' As he spoke we were scampering over this charming place, with a thunderous hollow sound that grasped every nerve with a hand of iron. In half a minute it was over and we had whisked round the corner and were out of sight of the grinning death that had seemed to stretch a long bony hand after us. With each succeeding hour as we penetrated deeper into the very heart of the Himalaya, our surroundings grew ever wilder, sterner, more majestic. Often our path was a mere ledge on a sheer face of rock, a granite wall on the right, sometimes actually overhanging the road and shutting out the sky, on the left a precipice dropping down to where the Jhelum raged and foamed in numberless cascades and waterfalls. For what countless ages must it have fretted and stormed before it cut out so deep a bed! In many places it was almost choked up with masses of tree trunks, all pines and deodars from the huge upland forests; these are put in by the wily Kashmiris, who thus make the patient Jhelum serve as railroad, waggons, and porters all in one.

A painful day's journey brought us to Garhi, where we slept

one night and made our first acquaintance with what Kashmiris can do with the wealth of wood with which nature has so liberally provided them. The little posting bungalow was built entirely of wood, the inner walls were panelled with light-coloured wood—deal, I dare say—and a broad dado of deep brown ran round them; the ceilings were carved into elaborate patterns, and inlaid with many colours. The effect was charming.

The next day we pursued our journey and reached Baramoula, more dead than alive. Chupatties, eggs, and milk were all they could furnish us for dinner; the rooms were little bigger than cabins, and the walls were formed of rough planks nailed together. The next morning we began to look about and to talk to the man in charge. He was himself a singular specimen, dressed in rough grey puttoo, with wildly matted hair hanging down his back, and surmounted by a conical red cap. He looked more like a camel driver than a butler. We inquired of him why the accommodation was so very bad at a large place like Baramoula, which was also the terminus of the tonga service. He replied by pointing to a pile of ruins at a short distance, and explained that *that* had been the rest-house for travellers, and a very superior one too, but the earthquakes that had occurred two years previously had demolished it. But, I urged, in two years it could have been rebuilt, he shrugged his shoulders and said that no order had come to do it, and who was he that he should know the intentions of the Government?

We next observed a row of enormous poplars planted very close together, and their leaves forming a thick and solid wall of foliage. These poplars are so managed as to form a real hedge of a strength equal to any masonry, and infinitely more beautiful. They are so planted that when full grown there is not more than two or three feet of space between them. While very young the bark is slit open and the end of a stout pole is inserted under it, the other end being similarly inserted into the next tree; about a foot higher up this process is repeated, and so on for eight or even ten feet. As the young trees grow, these poles are firmly clasped by the bark which completely incloses them, and the pole becomes, in fact, a part of the tree. Nothing could be simpler or more effectual. When the trees are well grown, vines and other creepers are trained up them, and these keep out inquisitive eyes as completely as the tree and poles prevent access to the garden within. The poplars grow to an immense height, and a more stately and

magnificent hedge cannot easily be imagined. The Residency at Srinagar is surrounded by such a hedge, and the row of poplars we saw at Baramoula was evidently the last relic of some once beautiful garden, belonging perhaps to a former king, but now long deserted and forgotten. Such relics are strewn broadcast all over India. A few ruined archways and pillars tell of a huge palace where some splendid monarch held his court, and royal revels made those now silent archways resound with mirth. Often in the heart of a wild jungle have I found and mused over these gigantic remains: perhaps an immense tank that once had a solid cement floor; beautiful marble steps led down to the water; a colonnade with pillars and much carved work surrounded it. Who built it? Who enjoyed it? No one can tell; the basin is filled up with rotten leaves, the roots of the peepul tree have split the marble stairs in every direction, a crumbling mass of brickwork in the centre indicates where stood the rajah's pleasure pavilion; the ruined colonnade is inhabited only by snakes and monkeys. Perhaps a poor ploughman brings his tired bullocks to drink the stagnant waters; perhaps once in ten years an English sahib pitches his tents there for a day, and thinks over the toil, the time, and the money buried in this grave, and calls to mind Omar Khayyám's melancholy words:

And we, that now make merry in the room
They left, and summer dresses in new bloom,
Ourselves, must we beneath the couch of earth
Descend, ourselves to make a couch—for whom?

Alike for those who for *to-day* prepare,
And those that after some *to-morrow* stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries,
'Fools! your reward is neither here nor there.'

There was nothing very interesting in Baramoula except these 'poplars wedded to the vine.' And we were in Kashmir not for pleasure but on duty, and that duty compelled my husband to proceed at once to Gulmerg. We were told that the Resident and Rajah Amar Singh were there, and it was necessary that he should at once put himself into communication with them. We accordingly breakfasted, as we had dined, on chupatties, milk, and eggs, and while doing so a man appeared with profound salaams, and said he was in charge of our conveyances. We were glad to hear this, as we had no idea how we were to get on, or what the distance might be. I saw our rough, and not over civil, butler speak

a word to this man, and I could not help laughing when I observed the ridiculous change that came over the former. He had treated us as ordinary travellers, and behold ! the sahib was a Government official, Government conveyances and horses were especially sent for him, and doubtless he had sufficient influence to have a poor man dismissed from an easy and lucrative post at a moment's notice. In the twinkling of an eye he became humble and suave, and, what was far more to the purpose, he instantly produced tea, tinned fish, jam, and various small luxuries which greatly improved the appearance of our breakfast table.

Our conveyances were then brought round, and we looked at them with some astonishment. There were two horses for my husband, and for myself and my little daughter were two of the State jampans, such as the Court ladies would travel in. They were about the size and shape of a small boat, but most dreadfully heavy and cumbrous. They were ornamented with a great deal of wood-carving, gilding, and vermillion ; a canopy covered the top, supported on poles, and between these were curtains of crimson gauze embroidered with gold stars. The inside was lined with white velvet stamped with coloured flowers, and there were more cushions than I knew what to do with. Four men carried each, and four more ran beside to relieve them : it was none too many. The weight was enormous, and all the comfort might have been secured with one-third of the material used. It seemed a shame to grumble, as everything was provided at the expense of the State ; but I did pity those unfortunate bearers towards the end of our eighteen-mile march. Eighteen miles seemed nothing after the sixty miles we had accomplished the day before. But such an eighteen miles ! At first it was easy enough. We passed over gently swelling uplands, covered with short turf studded with innumerable flowers—mauve and yellow pansies, white orchids, and the purple iris grew everywhere. The wild ravines which we had traversed on the two previous days, and through which the Jhelum plunged and raved, had totally disappeared. An almost tropical verdure surrounded us, without the rank, overwhelming growth of tropical forests ; tiny rivulets streamed over the crags and fell in showers of silver mist on to deep beds of maidenhair fern, and were instantly lost to sight under their clustering fronds. Pert little bulbuls hopped in our path with all the insolence of a London sparrow, or shrilly sang in the boughs overhead. Above us the sky was blue as an English April, flecked

with tiny white clouds ; and beyond us was always to be seen a solid and almost black mass of trees. These were part of the vast deodar forests of the Himalaya. About midday we halted for lunch. I find it hard to describe our feelings as we sat on the springy turf and looked around at all this fresh beauty. To understand our sensations it is necessary to have spent years of suffering and toil in the arid, parched plains of India ; to have thought with heart-sick longing on sweet English fields and meadows, and to have seen nothing better than burnt-up earth, yellow withered grass, and the frightful dust-covered prickly pear. To have endured for months the thick, choking dust, to feel it on the pillow as the weary head tosses through the burning night, on the book and newspaper, on the clothes one wears, to taste it in the tea and on the bread—when this has been borne for years, then the pleasure we felt at the sight of clean grass and flowers, of natural orchards and icy snow-fed rivulets, may be understood.

Our bearers, whose teeth were excellent, refreshed themselves with the wild apples and pears growing everywhere. I tried one, but it seemed more suitable for mending the roads than for human food. We started again, at the rate, perhaps, of a mile an hour. Our path was almost perpendicular ; recent rain had made it extremely slippery, and we got up it by means of ladder-like steps. When my husband's pony had come down on its knees about a dozen times, he decided that it would be easier to walk. We had about three miles of this, and it felt like twenty ; but finally, and almost without warning, we plunged into the forest. The contrast was startling—from blue sky and bright sunshine to a dim twilight and dark-green canopy. It must have been in such a wood that Lewis Morris got lost.

A sluggish wood,
Where scarce the faint fires of the setting stars,
Or some cold gleam of half discovered dawn,
Might pierce the darkling pines.

The 'flittering shades,' however, did not reveal themselves to us, and in their place we saw regiments, armies, whole nations of tree-trunks—trunks upright and living, proudly supporting the rich roof of foliage ; trunks upright but split and black, scorched by the fiery breath of the storm-god who rages in unequalled fury round the mighty Himalaya. The ground in many parts was completely blocked with the trunks lying on it, heaped together

in wild confusion, some just fallen, others so rotten with age that the least touch converts them into dust. Nothing grows here but deodars. The complete absence of sunshine, and the pine-needles which cover the ground to a thickness of many feet, effectually check all other growth.

In these enormous forests there must be wood enough to build the navies of the whole world : and what use is made of it ? It warms the huts of the half-barbarous Kashmiris ; it makes their boats, and forms the beautiful ceilings in their king's palaces. A little finds its way to Europe in the shape of carved screens and tables ; a little floats down the Jhelum and serves as sleepers for the railways of the Punjab. But for the most part the stately deodars spring up, mature, live their long life with their gloomy brethren, die, fall, and decay, witnessed by no eyes save those of the squirrel that eats their seed, the mountain bear, and the hyena. The wealth that is rotting on those mountain slopes is incalculable.

There was ample time for all these reflections, for we were fully two hours passing through this twilight region. We left it as suddenly as we had entered, and emerged into the fresh air and sunshine and also into the loveliest spot, surely, that the earth contains. A little circular valley lies cradled, peaceful and smiling, on the heart of the terrible Himalaya, as a babe might lie in the arms of some grim old warrior and laughingly play with his beard ! The ground undulated gently in this happy valley ; each knoll was covered with short thick grass of a vivid green, while in every hollow grew flowers to an extent that beggars description. Every colour and shade was there represented growing in one gorgeous mass : the half wild ponies that were feeding about in troops were almost hidden in flowers ; when one rolled on the ground he disappeared altogether. We were lost in astonished delight at the wonderful sight ; never had I even imagined such a thing as possible. I got out of my jampan and ran to the nearest of the flower-beds ; they reached my waist as I stepped in amongst them. I gathered them by the armful, only to throw them down again. I ought to mention that I stepped at the same time into four or five inches of water, for the ground was very swampy and little streams flowed everywhere. Never again, I fear, shall I look on so lovely a sight. The lush growth of flowers at our feet, the belt of sombre pines that girdled in this enchanting valley and above them the solemn changeless white peaks, their glittering swords pointing ever to heaven, their supreme immutable serenity

telling of an eternal peace and rest such as we poor fevered, hurried mortals need never hope to enjoy. We were now at a height of 9,500 feet, and the air felt keen and cold after the stifling plains of the Punjab. We were hungry and tired, and dinner and bed were becoming a serious consideration. Our satisfaction was great when we found ourselves taken to an excellent hotel, kept by one Mr. Nedou, an old friend of ours in Lahore. The hotel was then quite new, and built, of course, entirely of wood, and smelt deliciously of pine-resin. We found many English in Gulmerg, living for the most part in the most extraordinary huts. These are, in fact, nothing but the sheds in which the cattle are housed during the long and severe winter. In the spring they are turned out of doors, the place is cleaned according to Kashmiri notions of cleanliness, and there you have a summer residence. The floor is of earth covered with rushes, the walls of untrimmed planks, the roof is made of that universal standby, old kerosine tins; when it rains it leaks everywhere. With difficulty the cows are prevented from forcing their way in at night; they naturally look on it as their rightful home. The door and its fastenings would cause a London policeman to faint.

During our first night there we were disturbed by singular sounds in the next room; trampling, stamping, and champing were going on vigorously. What could this be? I had already seen a man who had been frightfully mauled by a bear the day before, and visions of a raid of these horrid animals terrified me. My husband, however, manfully donned a dressing-gown, armed himself with a stick, and sallied forth to do battle. I heard a tremendous stampede, and sounds as of a charge of cavalry. He returned laughing, and explained that he found the room full of ponies, who were eating the matting! He drove them out and fastened the door, and we slept in peace.

I must hurry on, though Gulmerg was so fascinating. The business with the Resident and Raja Amar Singh having been transacted, we left Gulmerg and dropped again down the mountain side and made our way back to the Jhelum, through thirty miles of the most tedious and uninteresting rice-fields that can be imagined; the heat was terrific, and the miasma drawn by the sun from the swampy ground very dangerous. At length we reached the river, and found there a state barge with a gorgeous red-and-gold canopy and more white velvet cushions waiting to receive us. Alas! for that white velvet when we left Kashmir

three months later. It was intended to receive the bare soft feet of ladies who had never walked a hundred yards, and never meant for muddy English boots and restless energetic English bodies. We tried to take care of it, but our efforts were vain. Twenty rowers in blue and red pulled us up the river to Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. The city has been built on both sides of the river, and the friendly Jhelum is at once its source of drinking-water, its bath, and its sewer. *Everything*, from the carcase of the dead bullock to the scourings of the rice-pot (if, indeed, the rice-pot ever is scoured) is thrown into it. *All* the water that is wanted is taken out of it. Anyone who wants to build in Srinagar builds just where and how and in what style he pleases. The streets, therefore, are narrow crooked lanes, where the walls on either side can be touched by the out-stretched hands. The filth of generations is accumulated in these dreadful places, and on these heaps lie dogs so mangy, diseased, and disgusting that to kill them all would be a charity to themselves and to others. Here also sit beggars, deformed almost out of all semblance to humanity; some of those dreadful figures are still indelibly impressed on my mind, and when I add that here are also lepers, their blotched faces and rotting hands and feet swarming with flies, and with that look of dull hopelessness so characteristic of leprosy, it will be seen that Srinagar is not a town in itself attractive or delightful. A single walk through those loathsome streets cured us of any wish to revisit it, and as I sit here writing in London the horrible odours are still filling my nostrils, and I feel again the sickening disgust I felt while picking my way through the vile dung-heaps and foul gutters of Srinagar. There is, however, one road through Srinagar that is pleasant enough, spacious and wide, of absolute smoothness and comparatively free from smells; I mean, of course, the Jhelum; it flows through the centre of the city. One cannot walk along the banks because of the houses, which seem to be literally pushing each other into the water; many of the projecting fronts are supported on poles that stand in the river. These houses are (as is everything in Kashmir) in every possible stage of dilapidation and decay. Many of them appear to be in the very act of falling, and that they survive the numerous earthquakes that occur is nothing short of a miracle. They are built entirely of wood, and many of them are ornamented with very ancient carving, often of beautiful design and workmanship, but invariably broken and indescribably dirty. Glass is

almost unknown, and the windows of the women's rooms are protected by lattices of carved wood, frequently of exquisite beauty, but usually with the interstices filled up with filthy rags or paper to keep out the cold. The winter is very severe, and all the cattle are brought into the *house*; they inhabit the ground floor, holes are made through the floor above for the express purpose of allowing the warm breath of the animals to ascend and heat the rooms above. In these the family live; food is stored in abundance, and during the whole winter the inhabitants remain at home, never leaving the house unless it is absolutely necessary to replenish the stock of water. Clothes are never changed, no washing is thought of, and when I add that nothing is carried out of the house, the condition of it and its inhabitants at the end of the winter must be left to my reader's imagination; mine, I confess, fails utterly.

To return to the river, it is spanned by seven bridges, built, of course, of wood and on piles so enormous that a boat passes between them with difficulty. This is necessary on account of the floods which occasionally sweep everything before them and scour out the city once in a while.

Innumerable flights of steps lead down to the river, and here, during summer, the women wash their clothes and the children play. I observed this washing of clothes with some interest, because they seemed to be always doing it, and yet I never saw anyone in clean clothes. The mystery was soon solved. The Kashmiri men and women dress almost exactly alike—that is, in a single garment of grey, unbleached, undyed wool, of the roughest and coarsest description. This is made something like a very loose nightgown, and reaches down about half-way between the knee and ankle. Some times a man wears a pair of odd-looking trousers under this: these will be of unbleached cotton, and are very tight from knee to ankle, and very loose and baggy above; sometimes a woman will twist a few yards of cotton stuff round her waist. But these are new-fangled innovations, to be looked on with distrust by steady respectable folk, and the national costume is the grey woollen nightgown. Now take a very dirty garment of blanket-like material, and dabble it about in the pea-soup waters of the Jhelum, beat it a few times on the stone steps, remember that the water is cold and hard, that no soap is used, and nothing is ironed, it is spread out on the steps where the children are playing till it is almost dry and then put on again, looking much as it did before these

feeble operations. After taking these observations I ceased to wonder why everybody wore dirty clothes. After living only a few weeks in Kashmir one's feelings of repugnance to their singular habits become considerably blunted, and other traits of their character are noticed. I am bound to confess that these are mostly to their credit. In some respects they closely resemble the Japanese: they are fully as artistic and tasteful, though not so imaginative; as cheerful and good-tempered, but with less vivacity. A more innocent, simple, docile, good-natured people cannot be imagined. As light-hearted and affectionate as the negro, but with a power of steady industry quite unknown to that gentleman, and an entire absence of his tendency towards sensuality. They are almost absurdly well disposed and manageable; crime is practically unknown; petty thefts, such as robbing orchards, are the worst offences. The mud walls and broken bottles of their gaol would fill an English burglar with derisive scorn. I think there is but one gaol in the country, and the prisoners are all occupied in making carpets and pottery by hand. The gaol is also the lunatic asylum. 'They are very happy here, poor things!' remarked one of the officials to me, and it was quite true. The very mild discipline served equally for the poor imbecile and for the vicious wretch who had been taken red-handed in the act of stealing a melon. But on this gentle method of dealing with offences there was one blot of which I must speak. Some five or six of the prisoners wore a different kind of dress, and I inquired what this meant. 'They are in for life,' was the reply. I asked their offence, wondering whether it would be murder, or high treason, or some desperate burglary of the State treasuries; but no, it was worse than this: these miserable criminals had been guilty of killing a cow! I stood aghast, but remembered in time to check any expression of the indignation I felt.

Kashmir, from a religious point of view, is quite unique among the Native States of India. The population is Mahommedan, and the rulers are Hindu. The reverse is the case everywhere else. In consequence, the people are in no way averse to beef; they do not worship the cow, or hold it in any way sacred. But to their Hindu rulers the cow is simply Divinity incarnate. What the Host is to a pious Roman Catholic, that the cow is to a Hindu. The killing of a cow is so unnatural and horrible a crime as to be absolutely unmentionable, and if it *must* be spoken of it is called 'the nameless offence,' or something of that kind. Some

years ago there was a dreadful famine in Kashmir, many hundreds died of starvation, and some famishing Mahommedans killed a cow and ate part of it. This was discovered, the offenders were seized, and these were the men we saw wearing out their hopeless lives in gaol. Fifty years ago they would most certainly have been executed without mercy. I am bound to add that this apparent severity has one most excellent result : in Kashmir there are none of the bitter feelings of hostility between Hindus and Mahommedans that prevail in British India. Scarcely a year passes that some human lives are not sacrificed in these quarrels, and the cause is almost invariably that the Mahommedans have killed a cow close to a Hindu temple or in some conspicuous place, the Hindus retaliate by tying up a pig in a Mahommedan Mosque, and a free fight follows inevitably. An Englishman once observed to a Hindu that it was a curious fact that among the Hindu laws there is not one that prohibits the use of beef as food. The man replied that such a law was unnecessary, and that in the English law books nothing was said concerning the use of human flesh as food. Hindu feeling on the subject could hardly have been described more simply or more forcibly.

I think the prevailing feature of the Kashmir people is their extreme poverty. Everyone is poor in reality, and his endeavour is always to look poorer than he is. He refuses to improve his property in any way ; he will not graft his fruit-trees from better stocks or bring fresh blood amongst his cattle, or manure his fields or build a house better than a hovel, or wear ornaments or any clothes but the coarsest homespun. Many efforts are made by the English officials to press these advantages on the farmer, but he declines positively, and his reason is good. He knows that on the slightest appearance of added wealth the tax-gatherers will be down on him, and demand sums that will absorb all his little increase. Why, then, should he work to feed these birds of prey ?

The revenue of Kashmir is collected in a manner so incredibly bad that one only wonders that the State manages to carry on at all.

Almost the entire revenue is taken in unhusked rice. This is collected by one man, weighed by another, given over to a third, passed on by him to a fourth, and by him consigned to boatmen to be conveyed by river to Srinagar. There it is again weighed, and finally deposited in the State granaries. Now, the villagers

bribe the first man to take less than his due, he bribes the second man to falsify the weights, and the weighing is performed in a manner absolutely shameless. A full third may be deducted for these two operations alone, but this is by no means the worst—the weight must somehow be made up into a semblance, at least, of what is due. This part is undertaken by the boatmen; they have plenty of time, for nobody is expected to hurry in Kashmir. Accordingly, as they pole leisurely along the river they mix earth and water with the rice until they have the right weight. The earth would not matter so much, but the water is fatal. I have visited the State granaries, and felt deeply indignant at the shocking waste of good food to be seen in them. I examined the rice; it was all more or less mouldy, and each grain was covered with black specks, a sure sign of decay. Nor was this all: the granary itself was nothing but a rough wooden shed, and the interior was quite sufficiently lit by the chinks and holes, through which sun and rain poured in plentifully. The rice was thrown in heaps on the bare earth floor, and this was riddled with holes, through which rats and mice were scampering in every direction. In this manner is the food of the people and the revenue of the State stolen and wasted. When I add that the collectors of the rice, in common with most other State servants, receive their pay in rice, and that they are allowed to help themselves to this before it is put into the granaries, it will at once be seen how very little of the revenue is left for State purposes.

Kashmir is a country the natural advantages of which can hardly be overstated. Its soil is of a fertility that certainly equals that of Italy. Every kind of climate can be had by ascending the slopes of the Himalaya, and therefore every sort of fruit and cereal will come to perfection; its water supply is perfect and constant. Its mineral wealth is great, though quite undeveloped. Its scenery is so magnificent that visitors from all parts of the world are attracted to it, and these buy its products and leave everywhere a silver deposit. Its forests are inexhaustible; and, finally, its position gives it immense value from a military and political point of view, and, in consequence, it will always be protected by the English. With all these advantages, Kashmir is always on the verge of bankruptcy, always in debt, always in arrears, and all for want of a firm civil administration to prevent the endless fraud and corruption by which the revenues are turned aside into the grasping hands of greedy and lazy officials.

The beautiful arts and manufactures of Kashmir ought to be, and, in fact, are, a source of wealth. But this wealth does not for the most part fill the pockets of the artisans. The trade is almost entirely in the hands of a few large firms; these receive the profit, while the workers get only a fixed and very low wage. I have visited the shawl manufactories. They are very curious places. The delicate shawls that used to be so fashionable are made almost in the open air, and mostly by boys of twelve or thirteen. The looms are set up in rough wooden sheds, open on three sides, and the boys sit close together. In front of each boy are pinned his instructions on a dirty little scrap of paper. These are most laconic, 'three red, five white, one blue,' that is all. The looms might have come out of the Ark, so antiquated and clumsy are they. Everything is done by hand, and I could not discover a single contrivance for saving labour. A fortune awaits him who can introduce machinery into Kashmir. The trade in shawls has greatly diminished of late years. The Franco-German War gave it a serious blow, for the French imported great quantities of these articles, and after that disastrous war it seems they could no longer afford such luxuries. But the effect of the change of fashion must have been more serious still. The more elaborate patterns take an extraordinary time to make—three years is not thought too long for a good shawl, and one day's work is practically invisible. Another odd arrangement is that the best shawls are made in a great number of small pieces, and these are then so skilfully sewed together that the joins are imperceptible on the right side, though quite visible on the wrong. In some shawls the pattern is worked in on the loom, in others a plain piece of material is taken and embroidered by hand so lavishly that the material itself completely disappears.

We remained about three months in Kashmir, and were very glad when the work was done and we were able to get away. The cold was uncomfortably severe before that time arrived, and our tiny wooden cottage was ill adapted to keep it out. We dropped down the river to Baramoula, and I remember that several bulbuls, desperate with hunger, flew in at the windows of our houseboat and helped themselves to our food with the greatest assurance; they were well fed that once, at any rate. Once more we stowed ourselves into one of those terrible tongas and speedily made our way down again to the plains of India.

THE SOWERS.

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN.

AUTHOR OF 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE NET IS DRAWN.

DURING the days following Paul's visit to the village the ladies did not see much male society. Paul and Steinmetz usually left the castle immediately after breakfast and did not return till nightfall.

'Is there anything wrong?' Maggie asked Steinmetz on the evening of the second day.

Steinmetz had just come into the vast drawing-room dressed for dinner—stout, placid, and very clean-looking. They were alone in the room.

'Nothing, my dear young lady—yet,' he answered, coming forward and rubbing his broad palms slowly together.

Maggie was reading an English newspaper. She turned its pages without pausing to notice the black and sticky obliterations effected by the postal authorities before delivery. It was no new thing to her now to come upon the Press Censor's handiwork in the columns of such periodicals and newspapers as Paul received from England.

'Because,' she said, 'if there is you need not be afraid of telling me.'

'To have that fear would be to offer you an insult,' replied Steinmetz. 'Paul and I are investigating matters, that is all. The plain truth, my dear young lady, is that we do not know ourselves what is in the wind. We only know there is something. You are a horsewoman—you know the feeling of a restive horse. One knows that he is only waiting for an excuse to shy or to kick or to rear. One feels it thrilling in him. Paul and I have that feeling in regard to the peasants. We are going the round of the outlying villages, steadily and carefully. We are seeking for the fly on the horse's body—you understand?'

'Yes, I understand.'

She gave a little nod. She had not lost colour, but there was an anxious look in her eyes.

'Some people would have sent to Tver for the soldiers,' Steinmetz went on. 'But Paul is not that sort of man. He will not do it yet. You remember our conversation at the Charity Ball in London?'

'Yes.'

'I did not want you to come then. I am sorry you have come now.'

Maggie laid aside the newspaper with a little laugh.

'But, Herr Steinmetz,' she said, 'I am not afraid. Please remember that. I have absolute faith in you—and in Paul.'

Steinmetz accepted this statement with his grave smile.

'There is only one thing I would recommend,' he said, 'and that is a perfect discretion. Speak of this to no one, especially to no servants. You remember your own mutiny in India. Gott! what wonderful people you English are—men and women alike! You remember how the ladies kept up and brazened it out before the servants. You must do the same. I think I hear the rustle of the Princess's dress. Yes! And there is no news in the papers, you say?'

'None,' replied Maggie.

It may not have been entirely by chance that Claude de Chauxville drove over to Osterno to pay his respects the next day, and expressed himself desolated at hearing that the Prince had gone out with Herr Steinmetz in a sleigh to a distant corner of the estate.

'My horses must rest,' said the Frenchman, calmly taking off his fur gloves. 'Perhaps the Princess will see me.'

A few minutes later he was shown into the morning-room.

'Did I see Mademoiselle Delafield on snow-shoes in the forest as I came along?' De Chauxville asked the servant in perfect Russian before the man left the room.

'Doubtless, Excellency. She went out on her snow-shoes half an hour ago.'

'That is all right,' said the Frenchman to himself when the door was closed.

He went to the fire and warmed his slim white fingers. There was an evil smile lurking beneath his moustache.

When Etta opened the door a minute later he bowed low

without speaking. There was a suggestion of triumph in his attitude.

'Well?' said the Princess, without acknowledging his salutation.

De Chauxville raised his eyebrows with the resigned surprise of a man to whom no feminine humour is new. He brought forward a chair.

'Will you sit?' he said, with exaggerated courtesy. 'I have much to say to you. Besides, we have all the time. Your husband and his German friend are miles away. I passed Miss Delafield in the forest. She is not quite at home on her snow-shoes yet. She cannot be back for at least half an hour.'

Etta bit her lip as she looked at the chair. She sat slowly down and drew in the folds of her rich dress.

'I have the good fortune to find you alone.'

'So you have informed me,' she replied coldly.

De Chauxville leant against the mantelpiece and looked down at her thoughtfully.

'At the bear-hunt the other day,' he said, 'I had the misfortune to—well, to fall out with the Prince. We were not quite at one on a question of etiquette. He thought that I ought to have fired. I did not fire; I was not ready. It appears that the Prince considered himself to be in danger. He was nervous—flurried.'

'You are not always artistic in your untruths,' interrupted Etta. 'I know nothing of the incident to which you refer, but in lying you should always endeavour to be consistent. I am sure Paul was not nervous—or flurried.'

De Chauxville smiled imperturbably. His end was gained. Etta obviously knew nothing of his attempt to murder Paul at the bear-hunt.

'It was nothing,' he went on; 'we did not come to words. But we have never been much in sympathy; the coldness is intensified, that is all. So I took the opportunity of calling when I knew he was away.'

'How did you know he was away?'

'Ah, Madame, I know more than I am credited with.'

Etta gave a little laugh and shrugged her shoulders.

'You do not care for Osterno?' suggested De Chauxville.

'I hate it.'

'Precisely. And I am here to help you to get away from

Russia once for all. Ah! you may shake your head. Some day, perhaps, I shall succeed in convincing you that I have only your interests at heart. I am here, Princess, to make a little arrangement with you—a final arrangement, I hope.’

He paused, looking at her with a sudden gleam in his eyes.

‘Not the last of all,’ he added in a different tone. ‘That will make you my wife.’

Etta allowed this statement to pass unchallenged. Her courage and energy were not exhausted. She was learning to nurse her forces.

‘Your husband,’ went on De Chauville, after he had sufficiently enjoyed the savour of his own words, ‘is a brave man. To frighten him it is necessary to resort to strong measures. The last and the strongest measure in the diplomat’s scale is the People. The People, Madame, will take no denial. It is a game I have played before—a dangerous game, but I am not afraid.’

‘You need not trouble to be theatrical with me,’ put in Etta scornfully. She was sitting with a patch of colour in either cheek. At times this man had the power of moving her, and she was afraid of allowing him to exercise it. She knew her own weakness—her inordinate vanity; for vanity is the weakness of strong women. She was ever open to flattery, and Claude de Chauville flattered her in every word he spoke; for by act and speech he made it manifest that she was the motive power of his existence.

‘A man who plays for a high stake,’ went on the Frenchman in a quieter voice, ‘must be content to throw his all on the table time after time. A week to-night—Thursday, the fifth of April—I will throw down my all on the turn of a card. For the People are like that. It is *rouge* or *noir*—one never knows. We only know that there is no third colour, no compromise.’

Etta was listening now with ill-disguised interest. At last he had given her something definite—a date.

‘On Thursday,’ he went on, ‘the peasants will make a demonstration. You know as well as I do—as well as Prince Pavlo does, despite his imperturbable face—that the whole country is a volcano which may break forth at any moment. But the control is strong, and therefore there is never a large eruption—a grumble here, a gleam of fire there, a sullen heat everywhere! But it is held in check by the impossibility of communication. It seems strange, but Russia stands because she has no penny postage. The great crash will come, not by force of arms, but by ways of

peace. The signal will be a postal system: the standard of the revolution will be a postage-stamp. All over this country there are millions waiting and burning to rise up and crush despotism, but they are held in check by the simple fact that they are far apart and they cannot write to each other. When, at last, they are brought together there will be no fight at all, because they will overwhelm their enemies. That time, Madame, has not come yet. We are only at the stage of tentative underground rumblings. But a little eruption is enough to wipe out one man if he be standing on the spot.'

'Go on,' said Etta quietly—too quietly, De Chauville might have thought had he been calmer.

'I want you,' he went on, 'to assist me. We shall be ready on Thursday. I shall not appear in the matter at all. I have strong colleagues at my back. Starvation and misery, properly handled, are strong incentives.'

'And how do you propose to handle them?' asked Etta in the quiet voice.

'The peasants will make a demonstration. The rest we must leave to—well, to the course of fortune. I have no doubt that our astute friend Karl Steinmetz will manage to hold them in check. But whatever the end of the demonstration, the outcome will be the impossibility of a longer residence in this country for the Prince Pavlo Alexis. A regiment of soldiers could hardly make it possible.'

'I do not understand,' said Etta. 'What you describe as a demonstration—is it a rising?'

De Chauville nodded, with a grin.

'In force, to take what they want by force?' asked the Princess.

De Chauville spread out his hands in his graceful Gallic way.

'That depends.'

'And what do you wish me to do?' asked Etta, with the same concentrated quiet.

'In the first place, to believe that no harm will come to you, either directly or indirectly. They would not dare to touch the Prince; they will content themselves with breaking a few windows.'

'What do you want me to do?' repeated Etta.

De Chauville paused.

'Merely,' he answered lightly, 'to leave open a door—a side

door. I understand that there is a door in the old portion of the castle leading up by a flight of stairs to the smoking-room, and thence to the new part of the building.'

Etta did not answer. De Chauville glanced at his watch and walked to the window, where he stood looking out. He was too refined a person to whistle, but his attitude was suggestive of that mode of killing time.

'This door I wish you to unbar yourself before dinner on Thursday evening,' he said, turning round and slowly coming towards her.

'And I refuse to do it,' said Etta.

'Ah!'

Etta sprung to her feet and faced him—a beautiful woman, a very queen of anger. Her blazing eyes were on a level with his.

'Yes,' she cried, with clenched fists, standing her full height till she seemed to look down into his mean, fox-like face. 'Yes; I refuse to betray my husband——'

'Stop! He is not your husband.'

Slowly the anger faded out of her eyes; her clenched fists relaxed. Her fingers were scraping nervously at the silk of her dress, like the fingers of a child seeking support. She seemed to lose several inches of her majestic stature.

'What do you mean?' she whispered. 'What do you mean?'

'Sydney Bamborough is your husband,' said the Frenchman without taking his dull eyes from her face.

'He is dead,' she hissed.

'Prove it!'

He walked past her and leant against the mantelpiece in the pose of easy familiarity which he had maintained during the first portion of their interview.

'Prove it, Madame,' he said again.

'He died at Tver,' she said; but there was no conviction in her voice. With her title and position to hold to she could face the world. Without these what was she?

'A local newspaper reports that the body of a man was discovered on the plains of Tver and duly buried in the pauper cemetery,' said De Chauville indifferently. 'Your husband—Sydney Bamborough, I mean—was, for reasons which need not be gone into here, in the neighbourhood of Tver at the time. A police officer, who has since been transferred to Odessa, was of the opinion that the dead man was a foreigner. There are about

twelve thousand foreigners in Tver—operatives in the manufactories. Your husband—Sydney Bamborough, *bien entendu*—left Tver to proceed eastward and cross Siberia to China in order to avoid the emissaries of the Charity League, who were looking out for him at the western frontier. He will be due at one of the Treaty Ports in China in about a month. Upon the supposition that the body discovered on the plains of Tver was that of your husband, you took the opportunity of becoming a princess. It was enterprising. I admire your spirit. But it was dangerous. I, Madame, can suppress Sydney Bamborough when he turns up. I have two arrows in my quiver for him: one is the Charity League, the other the Russian Government, who want him. Your husband—I beg your pardon—the Prince would perhaps take a different view of the case. It is a pretty story. I will tell it to him unless I have your implicit obedience.'

Etta stood dry-lipped before him. She tried to speak, but no words came from her lips.

De Chauxville looked at her with a quiet smile of triumph, and she knew that he loved her. There is no defining love, nor telling when it merges into hatred.

'Thursday evening, before dinner,' said De Chauxville.

And he left her standing on the hearthrug, her lips moving and framing no words.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN APPEAL.

'HAVE you spoken to the Princess?' asked Steinmetz, without taking the cigar from his lips.

They were driving home through the forest that surrounded Osterno as the sea surrounds an island. They were alone in the sleigh. That which they had been doing had required no servant. Paul was driving, and consequently the three horses were going as hard as they could. The snow flew past their faces like the foam over the gunwale of a boat that is thrashing into a ten-knot breeze. Yet it was not all snow. There were flecks of foam from the horses' mouths mingled with it.

'Yes,' answered Paul. His face was set and hard, his eyes stern. This trouble with the peasants was affecting him more keenly than he suspected. It was changing the man's face—

drawing lines about his lips, streaking his forehead with the marks of care. His position can hardly be realised by an Englishman unless it be compared to that of the captain of a great sinking ship full of human souls who have been placed under his care.

'And what did she say?' asked Steinmetz.

'That she would not leave unless we all went with her.'

Steinmetz drew the furs closer up round him.

'Yes,' he said, glancing at his companion's face, and seeing little but the eyes by reason of the sable collar of his coat, which met the fur of his cap; 'yes, and why not?'

'I cannot leave them,' answered Paul. 'I cannot go away now that there is trouble among them. What it is, goodness only knows! They would never have got like this by themselves. Somebody has been at them, and I don't think it is the Nihilists. It is worse than that. Some devil has been stirring them up, and they know no better. He is still at it. They are getting worse day by day, and I cannot catch him. If I do, by God! Steinmetz, I'll twist his neck.'

Steinmetz smiled grimly.

'Yes,' he answered, 'you are capable of it. For me, I am getting tired of the moujik. He is an inveterate, incurable fool. If he is going to be a dangerous fool as well, I should almost be inclined to let him go to the devil in his own way.'

'I dare say; but you are not in my position.'

'No; that is true, Pavlo. They were not my father's serfs. Generations of my ancestors have not saved generations of their ancestors from starvation. My fathers before me have not toiled and saved and legislated for them. I have not learnt medicine that I might doctor them. I have not risked my health and life in their sties, where pigs would refuse to live. I have not given my whole heart and soul to their welfare, to receive no thanks, but only hatred. No, it is different for me. I owe them nothing, *mein lieber*; that is the difference.'

'If I agree to make a bolt for Petersburg to-morrow, will you come?' retorted Paul.

'No,' answered the stout man.

'I thought not. Your cynicism is only a matter of words, Steinmetz, and not of deeds. There is no question of either of us leaving Osterno. We must stay and fight it right out here.'

'That is so,' answered Steinmetz, with the Teutonic stolidity

of manner which sometimes came over him. 'But the ladies—what of them?'

Paul did not answer. They were passing over the rise of a heavy drift. It was necessary to keep the horses up to their work to prevent the runners of the sleigh sinking into the snow. With voice and whip Paul encouraged them. He was kind to animals, but never spared them—a strong man who gave freely of his strength and expected an equal generosity.

'This is no place for Miss Delafield,' added Steinmetz, looking straight in front of him.

'I know that!' answered Paul sharply. 'I wish to God she was not here!' he added in a lower tone, and the words were lost beneath the frozen moustache.

Steinmetz made no answer. They drove on through the gathering gloom. The sky was of a yellow grey, and the earth reflected the dismal hue of it. Presently it began to snow, driving in a fine haze from the north. The two men lapsed into silence. Steinmetz, buried in his furs like a great cumbersome bear, appeared to be half asleep. They had had a long and wearisome day. The horses had covered their forty miles and more from village to village, where the two men had only gathered discouragement and foreboding. Some of the Starostas were sullen; others openly scared. None of them were glad to see Steinmetz. Paul had never dared to betray his identity. With the gendarmes—the tchinovniks—they had not deemed it wise to hold communication.

'Stop!' cried Steinmetz suddenly, and Paul pulled the horses on to their haunches.

'I thought you were asleep,' he said.

There was no one in sight. They were driving along the new road now, the highway Paul had constructed from Osterno to Tver. The road itself was, of course, indistinguishable, but the telegraph posts marked its course.

Steinmetz tumbled heavily out of his furs and went towards the nearest telegraph post.

'Where is the wire?' he shouted.

Paul followed him in the sleigh. Together they peered up into the darkness and the falling snow. The posts were there, but the wire was gone. A whole length of it had been removed. They were cut off from civilisation by one hundred and forty miles of untrodden snow.

Steinmetz clambered back into the sleigh and drew up the fur

apron. He gave a strange little laugh that had a ring of boyish excitement in it. This man had not always been stout and placid. He too had had his day, and those who knew him said that it had been a stirring one.

‘That settles one question,’ he said.

‘Which question?’ asked Paul.

He was driving as hard as the horses could lay hoof to ground, taken with a sudden misgiving and a great desire to reach Osterno before dark.

‘The question of the ladies,’ replied Steinmetz. ‘It is too late for them to go now.’

The village, nestling beneath the grim protection of Osterno, was deserted and forlorn. All the doors were closed, the meagre curtains drawn. It was very cold. There was a sense of relief in this great frost; for when Nature puts forth her strength men are usually cowed thereby.

At the castle all seemed to be in order. The groom, in his great sheepskin coat, was waiting in the doorway. The servants threw open the vast doors, and stood respectfully in the warm, brilliantly lighted hall while their master passed in.

‘Where is the Princess?’ Steinmetz asked his valet while he was removing the evidences of a long day in the open air.

‘In her drawing-room, Excellency.’

‘Then go and ask her if she will give me a cup of tea in a few minutes.’

And the man, a timorous German, went.

A few minutes later Steinmetz, presenting himself at the door of the little drawing-room attached to Etta’s suite of rooms, found the Princess in a matchless tea-gown waiting beside a table laden with silver tea appliances—a dainty samovar, a tiny tea-pot, a spirit-lamp and the rest, all in the wonderful silver-work of the Slavonski Bazaar in Moscow.

‘You see,’ she said with a smile, for she always smiled on men, ‘I have obeyed your orders.’

Steinmetz bowed gravely. He was one of the few men who could face that smile and be strong. He closed the door carefully behind him. No mention was made of the fact that his message had implied, and she had understood, that he wished to see her alone. Etta was rather pale. There was an anxious look in her eyes—behind the smile as it were. She was afraid of this man. She looked at the flame of the samovar, busying herself among the

tea-things with pretty curving fingers and rustling sleeves. But the tea was never made.

'I begin to think,' said Steinmetz, coming to the point in his bluff way, 'that you are a sort of beautiful Jonah, a graceful stormy petrel, a fair wandering Jewess. There is always trouble where you go.'

She glanced at his broad face, and read nothing there.

'Go on,' she said. 'What have I been doing now? How you do hate me, Herr Steinmetz!'

'Perhaps it is safer than loving you,' he answered with his grim humour.

'I suppose,' she said, with a quaint little air of resignation which was very disarming, 'that you have come here to scold me—you do not want any tea?'

'No; I do not want any tea.'

She turned the wick of the spirit-lamp, and the peaceful music of the samovar was still. In her clever eyes there was a little air of sidelong indecision. She could not make up her mind how to take him. Her chiefest method was so old as to be biblical. Yet she could not take him with her eyelids. She had tried.

'You are horribly grave,' she said.

'The situation,' he replied, 'is horribly grave.'

Etta looked up at him as he stood before her, and the lamp-light, falling on the perfect oval of her face, showed it to be white and drawn.

'Princess,' said the man, 'there are in the lives of some of us times when we cease to be men and women, and become mere human beings. There are times, I mean, when the thousand influences of sex die at one blow of Fate. This is such a time. We must forget that you are a beautiful woman; I verily believe that there is none more beautiful in the world. I once knew one whom I admired more, but that was not because she was more beautiful. That, however, is my own story, and this'—he paused and looked round the little room, furnished, decorated for her comfort—'this is your story. We must forget that I am a man, and therefore subject to the influence of your beauty.'

She sat looking up into his strong, grave face, and during all that followed he never moved.

'I know you,' he said, 'to be courageous, and must ask you to believe that I exaggerate nothing in what I am about to tell you.'

I tell it to you instead of leaving Paul to do so because I know his complete fearlessness, and his blind faith in a people who are unworthy of it. He does not realise the gravity of the situation. They are his own people. A sailor never believes that his own ship is unseaworthy.'

'Go on,' said Etta, for he had paused.

'This country,' he continued, 'is unsettled. The people of the estate are on the brink of a revolt. You know what the Russian peasant is. It will be no Parisian *émeute*, half noise, half laughter. We cannot hope to hold this old place against them. We cannot get away from it. We cannot send for help because we have no one to send. Princess, this is no time for half-confidences. I know—for I know these people better even than Paul knows them—I am convinced that this is not the outcome of their own brains. They are being urged on by some one. There is some one at their backs. This is no revolt of the peasants, organised by the peasants. Princess, you must tell me all you know!'

'I—I,' she stammered, 'I know nothing.'

And then suddenly she burst into tears, and buried her face in a tiny useless handkerchief. It was so unlike her and so sudden that Steinmetz was startled.

He laid his great hand soothingly on her shoulder.

'I know,' he said quietly, 'I know more than you think. I am no saint, Princess, myself. I too have had my difficulties. I have had my temptations, and I have not always resisted. God knows it is difficult for men to do always the right thing. It is a thousand times more difficult for women. When we spoke together in Petersburg, and I offered you my poor friendship, I was not acting in the dark. I knew as much then as I do now. Princess, I knew about the Charity League papers. I knew more than any except Stepan Lanovitch, and it was he who told me.'

He was stroking her shoulder with the soothing movements that one uses towards a child in distress. His great hand, broad and thick, had a certain sense of quiet comfort and strength in it. Etta ceased sobbing, and sat with bowed head looking through her tears into the gay wood-fire. It is probable that she failed to realise the great charity of the man who was speaking to her. For the capacity for evil merges at some point or other into incapability for comprehending good.

'Is that all he knows?' she was wondering.

The suggestion that Sydney Bamborough was not dead had

risen up to eclipse all other fear in her mind. In some part her thought reached him.

'I know so much,' he said, 'that it is safest to tell me more. I offered you my friendship because I think that no woman could carry through your difficulties unaided. Princess, the admiration of Claude de Chauxville may be pleasant, but I venture to think that my friendship is essential.'

Etta raised her head a little. She was within an ace of handing over to Karl Steinmetz the rod of power held over her by the Frenchman. There was something in Steinmetz that appealed to her and softened her, something that reached a tender part of her heart through the coating of vanity, through the hardness of worldly experience.

'I have known De Chauxville twenty-five years,' he went on, and Etta deferred her confession. 'We have never been good friends, I admit. I am no saint, Princess, but De Chauxville is a villain. Some day you may discover, when it is too late, that it would have been for Paul's happiness, for your happiness, for everyone's good to have nothing more to do with Claude de Chauxville. I want to save you that discovery. Will you act upon my advice? Will you make a stand now? Will you come to me and tell me all that De Chauxville knows about you that he could ever use against you? Will you give yourself into my hands—give me your battle to fight? You cannot do it alone. Only believe in my friendship, Princess. That is all I ask.'

Etta shook her head.

'I think not,' she answered, in a voice too light, too superficial, too hopelessly shallow for the depth of the moment. She was thinking only of Sydney Bamborough, and of that dread secret. She fought with what arms she wielded best—the lightest, the quickest, the most baffling.

'As you will,' said Steinmetz.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ON THE EDGE OF THE STORM.

A RUSSIAN village kabák, with a smoking lamp, of which the chimney is broken. The greasy curtains drawn across the small windows exclude the faintest possibility of a draught. The moujik does not like a draught; in fact, he hates the fresh air of heaven.

Air that has been breathed three or four times over is the air for him; it is warmer. The atmosphere of this particular inn is not unlike that of every other inn in the White Empire, inasmuch as it is heavily seasoned with the scent of cabbage soup. The odour of this nourishing compound is only exceeded in unpleasantness by the taste of the same. Added to this warm smell there is the smoke of a score of the very cheapest cigarettes. The Russian peasant smokes his cigarette now. It is the first step, and it does not cost him much. It is the dawn of Progress—the thin end of the wedge which will broaden out into Anarchy. The poor man who smokes a cigarette is sure to pass on to Socialistic opinions and troubles in the market-place. Witness the cigarette-smoking countries. Moreover, this same poor man is not a pleasant companion. He smokes a poor cigarette.

There is also the smell of vodka, which bottled curse is standing in tumblers all down the long table. The news has spread in Osterno that vodka is to be had for the asking at the kabák, where there is a meeting. Needless to say, the meeting is a large one. Foolishness and thirst are often found in the same head—a cranium which, by the way, is exceptionally liable to be turned by knowledge or drink.

If the drink at the kabák of Osterno was dangerous, the knowledge was no less so.

‘I tell you, little fathers,’ an orator was shouting, ‘that the day of the capitalist has gone. The rich men—the princes, the nobles, the great merchants, the monopolists, the *techinovniks*—tremble. They know that the poor man is awakening at last from his long lethargy. What have we done in Germany? What have we done in America? What have we done in England and France?’

Whereupon he banged an unwashed fist upon the table with such emphasis that more than one of the audience clutched his glass of vodka in alarm, lest a drop of the precious liquor should be wasted.

No one seemed to know what had been done in Germany, in America, in England, or in France. The people’s orator is a man of many questions and much fist-banging. The *moujiks* of Osterno gazed at him beneath their shaggy brows. Half of them did not understand him. They were as yet uneducated to a comprehension of the street orator’s periods. A few of the more intelligent waited for him to answer his own questions, which he

failed to do. A vague and ominous question carries as much weight with some people as a statement, and has the signal advantage of being less incriminating.

The speaker—a neckless, broad-shouldered ruffian of the type known in England as ‘unemployed’—looked round with triumphant head well thrown back. From his attitude it was obvious that he had been the salvation of the countries named, and had now come to Russia to do the same for her. He spoke with the throaty accent of the Pole. It was quite evident that his speech was a written one—probably a printed harangue issued to him and his compeers for circulation throughout the country. He delivered many of the longer words with a certain unctuous roll of the tongue, and an emphasis indicating the fact that he did not know their meaning.

‘From afar,’ he went on, ‘we have long been watching you. We have noted your difficulties and your hardships, your sickness, your starvation. “These men of Tver,” we have said, “are brave and true and steadfast. We will tell them of liberty.” So I have come to you, and I am glad to see you. Alexander Alexandrovitch, pass the bottle down the table. You see, little fathers, I have not come begging for your money. No; keep your kopecks in your pocket. We do not want your money. We are no tchinovniks. We prove it by giving you vodka to keep your throats wet and your ears open. Fill up your glasses—fill up your glasses.’

The little fathers of Osterno understood this part of the harangue perfectly, and acted upon it.

The orator scratched his head reflectively. There was a certain business-like mouthing of his periods, showing that he had learnt all this by heart. He did not press all his points home in the manner of one speaking from his own brain.

‘I see before me,’ he went on, without an overplus of sequence, ‘men worthy to take their place among the rulers of the world—eh—er—rulers of the world, little fathers.’

He paused and drank half a tumbler of vodka. His last statement was so obviously inapplicable—what he actually did see was so very far removed from what he said he saw—that he decided to relinquish the point.

‘I drink,’ he cried, ‘to Liberty and Equality!’

Some of the little fathers also drank, to assuage an hereditary thirst.

'And now,' continued the orator, 'let us get to business.' I think we understand each other?'

He looked round with an engaging smile upon faces brutal enough to suit his purpose, but quite devoid of intelligence. There was not much understanding there.

'The poor man has only one way of making himself felt—force. We have worked for generations, we have toiled in silence, and we have gathered strength. The time has now come for us to put forth our strength. The time has gone by for merely asking for what we want. We asked, and they heard us not. We will now go and take!'

A few who had heard the speech or something like it before shouted their applause at this moment. Before the noise had subsided the door opened, and two or three men pushed their way into the already overcrowded room.

'Come in, come in!' cried the orator; 'the more the better. You are all welcome. All we require, then, little fathers, is organisation. There are nine hundred souls in Osterno; are you going to bow down before one man? All men are equal—moujik and bárin, krestyanin and prince. Why do you not go up to the castle that frowns down upon the village, and tell the man there that you are starving, that he must feed you, that you are not going to work from dawn till eve while he sits on his velvet couch and smokes his gold-tipped cigarettes. Why do you not go and tell him that you are not going to starve and die while he eats caviare and peaches from gold plates and dishes?'

A resounding bang of the fist finished this fine oration, and again the questions were unanswered.

'They are all the same, these aristocrats,' the man thundered on. 'Your prince is as the others, I make no doubt. Indeed, I know; for I have been told by good friend Abramitch here. A clever man our friend Abramitch, and when you get your liberty—when you get your Mir—you must keep him in mind. Your prince, then—this Howard-Alexis—treats you like the dirt beneath his feet. Is it not so? He will not listen to your cry of hunger. He will not give you a few crumbs of food from his gold dishes. He will not give you a few kopecks of the millions of roubles that he possesses. And where did he get those roubles? Ah! where did he get them—eh? Tell me that.'

Again the interrogative unwashed fist. As the orator's wild and frenzied eye travelled round the room it lighted on a form near the door—a man standing a head and shoulders above

anyone in the room, a man enveloped in an old brown coat, with a woollen shawl round his throat hiding half his face.

'Who is that?' cried the orator, with an unsteady, pointing finger. 'He is no moujik. Is that a tchinovnik, little fathers? Has he come here to our meeting to spy upon us?'

'You may ask them who I am,' replied the giant. 'They know; they will tell you. It is not the first time that I tell them they are fools. I tell them again now. They are fools and worse to listen to such windbags as you.'

'Who is it?' cried the paid agitator. 'Who is this man?'

His eyes were red with anger and with vodka; his voice was unsteady. His outstretched hand shook.

'It is the Moscow Doctor,' said a man beside him—'the Moscow Doctor.'

'Then I say he is no doctor,' shouted the orator. 'He is a spy—a Government spy, a tchinovnik. He has heard all we have said. He has seen you all. Brothers, that man must not leave this room alive. If he does, you are lost men.'

Some few of the more violent spirits rose and pressed tumultuously towards the door. The agitator shouted and screamed, urging them on, taking good care to remain in the safe background himself. Every man in the room rose to his feet. They were full of vodka and fury and ignorance. Spirit and tall talk taken on an empty stomach are dangerous stimulants.

Paul stood with his back to the door and never moved.

'Sit down, fools!' he cried. 'Sit down. Listen to me. You dare not touch me; you know that.'

It seemed that he was right, for they stopped with staring, stupid eyes and idle hands.

'Will you listen to me, whom you have known for years, or to this talker from the town? Choose now. I am tired of you. I have been patient with you for years. You are sheep; are you fools also, to be dazzled by the words of an idle talker who promises all and gives nothing?'

There was a sullen silence. Paul had lost his power over them, and he knew it. He was quite cool and watchful. He knew that he was in danger. These men were wild and ignorant. They were mad with drink and the brave words of the agitator.

'Choose now!' he shouted, feeling for the handle of the door behind his back.

They made no sign, but watched the faces of their leaders.

'If I go now,' said Paul, 'I never come again.'

He opened the door. The men whom he had nursed and clothed and fed, whose lives he had saved again and again, stood sullen and silent.

Paul passed slowly out and closed the door behind him. Without it was dark and still. There would be a moon presently, and in the meantime it was preparing to freeze harder than ever.

Paul walked slowly up the village street, while two men emerged separately from the darkness of by-lanes and followed him. He did not heed them. He was not aware that the thermometer stood somewhere below zero. He did not even trouble to draw on his fur gloves.

He felt like a man whose own dogs have turned against him. The place that these peasants had occupied in his heart had been precisely that vacancy which is filled by dogs and horses in the hearts of many men. There was in his feeling for them that knowledge of a complete dependence by which young children draw and hold a mother's love.

Paul Howard-Alexis was not a man to analyse his thoughts. Your strong man is usually ignorant of the existence of his own feelings. He is never conscious of them. Paul walked slowly through the village of Osterno and realised in his uncompromising honesty that of the nine hundred men who lived therein there were not three upon whom he could rely. He had upheld his peasants for years against the cynic truths of Karl Steinmetz. He had resolutely refused to admit even to himself that they were as devoid of gratitude as they were of wisdom. And this was the end of all.

One of the men following him hurried on and caught him up.

'Excellency,' he gasped, breathless with his haste, 'you must not come here alone any longer. I am afraid of them—I have no control.'

Paul paused, and suited his pace to the shorter legs of his companion.

'Starosta!' he said. 'Is that you?'

'Yes, Excellency. I saw you go into the kabák, so I waited outside and watched. I did not dare to go inside. They will not allow me there. They are afraid that I should give information.'

'How long have these meetings been going on?'

'The last three nights, Excellency, in Osterno; but it is the same all over the estate.'

'Only on the estate?'

'Yes, Excellency.'

'Are you sure of that?'

'Yes, Excellency.'

Paul walked on in silence for some paces. The third man followed them without catching them up.

'I do not understand, Excellency,' said the Starosta anxiously.

'It is not the Nihilists.'

'No; it is not the Nihilists.'

'And they do not want money, Excellency; that seems strange.'

'Very,' admitted Paul ironically.

'And they give vodka.'

This seemed to be the chief stumbling-block in the Starosta's road to a solution of the mystery.

'Find out for me,' said Paul after a pause, 'who this man is, where he comes from, and how much he is paid to open his mouth. We will pay him more to shut it. Find out as much as you can and let me know to-morrow.'

'I will try, Excellency; but I have little hope of succeeding. They distrust me. They send the children to my shop for what they want, and the little ones have evidently been told not to chatter. The moujiks avoid me when they meet me. What can I do?'

'You can show them that you are not afraid of them,' answered Paul. 'That goes a long way with the moujik.'

They walked on together through the lane of cottages, where furtive forms lurked in doorways and behind curtains. And Paul had only one word of advice to give, upon which he harped continually: 'Be thou very courageous—be thou very courageous.' Nothing new, for so it was written in the oldest book of all. The Starosta was a timorous man, needing such strong support as his master gave him from time to time.

At the great gates of the park they paused, and Paul gave the Mayor of Osterno a few last words of advice. While they were standing there the third man, who had been following, joined them.

'Is that you, Steinmetz?' asked Paul, his hand thrust with suspicious speed into his jacket pocket.

'Yes.'

'What are you doing here?'

‘Watching you,’ answered Karl Steinmetz in his mild way. ‘It is no longer safe for either of us to go about alone. It was mere foolery your going to that kabák.’

CHAPTER XXXVI.

À TROIS.

OF all the rooms in the great castle Etta liked the morning-room best. Persons of a troubled mind usually love to look upon a wide prospect. The mind, no doubt, fears the unseen approach of detection or danger, and transmits this dread to the eye, which likes to command a wide view all around.

The great drawing-room was only used after dinner. Until that time the ladies spent the day either in their own boudoirs or in the morning-room looking over the cliff. Here, while the cold weather lasted, Etta had tea served, and thither the gentlemen usually repaired at the hour set apart for the homely meal. They had come regularly the last few evenings. Paul and Steinmetz had suddenly given up their long drives to distant parts of the estate.

Here the whole party was assembled on the Sunday afternoon following Paul’s visit to the village kabák, and to them came an unexpected guest. The door was thrown open, and Claude de Chauville, pale, but self-possessed and quiet, came into the room. The perfect ease of his manner bespoke a practised familiarity with the position difficult. His last parting with Paul and Steinmetz had been, to say the least of it, strained. Maggie, he knew, disliked and distrusted him. Etta hated and feared him.

He was in riding costume—a short fur jacket, fur gloves, a cap in his hand, and a silver-mounted crop. A fine figure of a man—smart, well turned out, well-groomed—a gentleman.

‘Prince,’ he said frankly, ‘I have come to throw myself upon your generosity. Will you lend me a horse? I was riding in the forest when my horse fell over a root and lamed himself. I found I was only three miles from Osterno, so I came. My misfortune must be my excuse for this—intrusion.’

Paul performed graciously enough that which charity and politeness demanded of him. There are plenty of people who trade unscrupulously upon these demands, but it is probable that

they mostly have their reward. Love and friendship are stronger than charity and politeness, and those who trade upon the latter are rarely accorded the former.

So Paul ignored the probability that De Chauxville had lamed his horse on purpose, and offered him refreshment while his saddle was being transferred to the back of a fresh mount. Farther than that he did not go. He did not consider himself called upon to offer a night's hospitality to the man who had attempted to murder him a week before.

With engaging frankness De Chauxville accepted everything. It is an art soon acquired and soon abused. There is something honest in an ungracious acceptance of favours. Steinmetz suggested that perhaps Monsieur de Chauxville had lunched sparsely, and the Frenchman admitted that such was the case, but that he loved afternoon tea above all meals.

'It is so innocent and simple, I know. I have the same feeling myself,' concurred Steinmetz courteously.

'Do you ride about the country much alone?' asked Paul, while the servants were setting before this uninvited guest a few more substantial delicacies.

'Ah, no, Prince. This is my first attempt, and if it had not procured me this pleasure I should say that it will be my last.'

'It is easy to lose yourself,' said Paul; 'besides'—and the two friends watched the Frenchman's face closely—'besides, the country is disturbed at present.'

De Chauxville was helping himself daintily to *pâté de foie gras*.

'Ah, indeed. Is that so?' he answered. 'But they would not hurt me—a stranger in the land.'

'And an orphan, too, I have no doubt,' added Steinmetz, with a laugh. 'But would the moujik pause to inquire, my very dear De Chauxville?'

'At all events, I should not pause to answer,' replied the Frenchman in the same light tone. 'I should evacuate. Ah, Mademoiselle,' he went on, addressing Maggie, 'they have been attempting to frighten you, I suspect, with their stories of disturbed peasantry. It is to keep up the lurid local colour. They must have their romance, these Russians.'

And so the ball was kept rolling. There was never any lack of conversation when Steinmetz and De Chauxville were together, nor was the talk without a subtle sub-flavour of acidity. At length

the centre of attention himself diverted that attention. He inaugurated an argument over the best cross-country route from Osterno to Thors, which sent Steinmetz out of the room for a map. During the absence of the watchful German he admired the view from the window, and this strategic movement enabled him to say to Etta aside:

‘I must see you before I leave the house; it is absolutely necessary.’

Not long after the return of Steinmetz and the final decision respecting the road to Thors, Etta left the room, and a few minutes later the servant announced that the Baron’s horse was at the door.

De Chauxville took his leave at once, with many assurances of lasting gratitude.

‘Kindly,’ he added, ‘make my adieux to the Princess; I will not trouble her.’

Quite by accident he met Etta at the head of the state staircase, and expressed such admiration for the castle that she opened the door of the large drawing-room and took him to see that apartment.

‘What I arranged for Thursday is for the day after to-morrow—Tuesday,’ said De Chauxville as soon as they were alone. ‘We cannot keep them back any longer. You understand—the side door to be opened at seven o’clock. Ah! who is this?’

They both turned. Steinmetz was standing behind them, but he could not have heard De Chauxville’s words. He closed the door carefully, and came forward with his grim smile.

‘A nous trois!’ he said, and the subsequent conversation was in the language in which these three understood each other best.

De Chauxville bit his lip and waited. It was a moment of the tensest suspense.

‘A nous trois!’ repeated Steinmetz. ‘De Chauxville, you love an epigram. The man who over-estimates the foolishness of others is himself the biggest fool concerned. A lame horse—the Prince’s generosity—making your adieux. *Mon Dieu!* you should know me better than that after all these years. No, you need not look at the door. No one will interrupt us. I have seen to that.’

His attitude and manner indicated a complete mastery of the situation, but whether this assumption was justified by fact or was a mere trick it was impossible to say. There was in the man something strong and good and calm—a manner never acquired by

one who has anything to conceal. His dignity was perfect. One forgot his stoutness, his heavy breathing, his ungainly size. He was essentially manly, and a presence to be feared. The strength of his will made itself felt.

He turned to the Princess with the grave courtesy that always marked his attitude towards her.

'Madame,' he said, 'I fully recognise your cleverness in raising yourself to the position you now occupy. But I would remind you that that position carries with it certain obligations. It is hardly dignified for a princess to engage herself in a vulgar love intrigue in her own house.'

'It is not a vulgar love intrigue,' cried Etta, with blazing eyes. 'I will not allow you to say that. Where is your boasted friendship? Is this a sample of it?'

Karl Steinmetz bowed gravely, with outspread hands.

'Madame, that friendship is at your service, now as always.'

De Chauville gave a scornful little laugh. He was biting the end of his moustache as he watched Etta's face. For a moment the woman stood—not the first woman to stand thus—between two fears. Then she turned to Steinmetz. The victory was his—the greatest he had ever torn from the grasp of Claude de Chauville.

'You know,' she said, 'that this man has me in his power.'

'You alone. But not both of us together,' answered Steinmetz.

De Chauville looked uneasy. He gave a careless little laugh.

'My good Steinmetz, you allow your imagination to run away with you. You interfere in what does not concern you.'

'My very dear De Chauville, I think not. At all events, I am going to continue to interfere.'

Etta looked from one to the other. She had at the first impulse gone over to Steinmetz. She was now meditating drawing back. If De Chauville kept cool all might yet be well—the dread secret of the probability of Sydney Bamborough being alive might still be withheld from Steinmetz. For the moment it would appear that she was about to occupy the ignominious position of the bone of contention. If these two men were going to use her as a mere excuse to settle a lifelong quarrel of many issues, it was probable that there would not be much left of her character by the time that they had finished.

She had to decide quickly. She decided to assume the rôle of peacemaker.

'Monsieur de Chauxville was on the point of going,' she said.
'Let him go.'

'Monsieur de Chauxville is not going until I have finished with him, Madame. This may be the last time we meet. I hope it is.'

De Chauxville looked uneasy. His was a ready wit, and fear was the only feeling that paralysed it. Etta looked at him. Was his wit going to desert him now when he most needed it? He had ridden boldly into the lion's den. Such a proceeding requires a certain courage, but a higher form of intrepidity is required to face the lion standing before the exit.

De Chauxville looked at Steinmetz with shifty eyes. He was very like the mask of the lynx in the smoking-room, even to the self-conscious, deprecatory smile on the countenance of the forest sneak.

'Keep your temper,' he said; 'do not let us quarrel in the presence of a lady.'

'No; we will keep the quarrel till afterwards.'

Steinmetz turned to Etta.

'Princess,' he said, 'will you now, in my presence, forbid this man to come to this or any other house of yours? Will you forbid him to address himself either by speech or letter to you again?'

'You know I cannot do that,' replied Etta.

'Why not?'

Etta made no answer.

'Because,' replied De Chauxville for her, 'the Princess is too wise to make an enemy of me. In that respect she is wiser than you. She knows that I could send you and your Prince to Siberia.'

Steinmetz laughed.

'Nonsense!' he said. 'Princess,' he went on, 'if you think that the fact of De Chauxville numbering among his friends a few obscure police spies gives him the right to persecute you, you are mistaken. Our friend is very clever, but he can do no harm with the little that he knows of the Charity League.'

Etta remained silent. The silence made Steinmetz frown.

'Princess,' he said gravely, 'you were very indignant just now because I made so bold as to put the most natural construction upon the circumstances in which I found you. It was a pre-arranged meeting between De Chauxville and yourself. If the meeting was not the outcome of an intrigue such as I mentioned,

nor the result of this man's hold over you on account of the Charity League, what was it? Princess, what was it? I beg of you to answer.'

Etta made no reply. Instead, she raised her eyes and looked at De Chauxville.

'Without going into affairs which do not concern you,' said the Frenchman, answering for her, 'I think you will recognise that the secret of the Charity League was quite sufficient excuse for me to request a few minutes alone with the Princess.'

Of this Steinmetz took no notice. He was standing in front of Etta, between De Chauxville and the door. His broad, deeply-lined face was flushed with the excitement of the moment. His great mournful eyes, yellow and drawn with much reading and the hardships of a rigorous climate, were fixed anxiously on her face.

Etta was not looking at him. Her eyes were turned towards the window, but they did not see with comprehension. She was stony and stubborn.

'Princess,' said Steinmetz, 'answer me before it is too late. Has De Chauxville any other hold over you?'

Etta nodded, and the little action brought a sudden gleam to the Frenchman's eyes.

'If,' said Steinmetz, looking from one to the other, 'if you two have been deceiving Paul I will have no mercy—I warn you of that.'

Etta turned on him.

'Can you not believe me?' she cried. 'I have practised no deception in common with Monsieur de Chauxville.'

'The Charity League is quite enough for you, my friend,' put in the Frenchman hurriedly.

'You know no more of the Charity League than you did before—than the whole world knew before—except this lady's share in the disposal of the papers,' said Steinmetz.

'And this lady's share in the disposal of the papers will not be welcome news to the Prince,' answered De Chauxville.

'Welcome or unwelcome, he shall be told of it to-night.'

Etta looked round sharply, her lips apart and trembling.

'By whom?' asked De Chauxville.

'By me,' replied Steinmetz.

There was a momentary pause. De Chauxville and Etta exchanged a glance. Etta felt that she was lost. This Frenchman

was not one to spare either man or woman from any motive of charity or chivalry.

‘Even if that is so,’ he said, ‘the Princess is not relieved from the embarrassment of her situation.’

‘No?’

‘No, my astute friend. There is a little matter connected with Sydney Bamborough which has come to my knowledge.’

Etta moved, but she said nothing. The sound of her breathing was startlingly loud.

‘Ah! Sydney Bamborough,’ said Steinmetz slowly. ‘What about him?’

‘He is not dead; that is all.’

Karl Steinmetz passed his broad hand down over his face, covering his mouth for a second.

‘But he died. He was found on the steppe, and buried at Tver.’

‘So the story runs,’ said De Chauxville, with easy sarcasm. ‘But who found him on the steppe? Who buried him at Tver?’

‘I did, my friend.’

The next second Steinmetz staggered back a step or two as Etta fell heavily into his arms. But he never took his eyes off De Chauxville.

(To be continued.)

THE
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*CLEG KELLY, ARAB OF THE CITY:
HIS PROGRESS AND ADVENTURES.¹*

BY S. R. CROCKETT,
AUTHOR OF 'THE STICKIT MINISTER,' 'THE RAIDERS,' ETC.

ADVENTURE XXVIII.

THE ENGINE-DRIVER WITH THE BEARD.

WHAT James Annan said to little Janet of Inverness on the way home, and what Janet of Inverness said to James Annan, I know. But since it concerns only themselves, with themselves I will leave it. At all events, it was no long season before they were at one. Miss Cecilia Tennant's exact share in the plot is a harder matter to apportion. But that she had a share in it far beyond the mere issuing of the invitations is certain, for Mr. Donald Iverach was heard saying to the arch-conspirator in the semi-privacy of the dusky angle of the stairs, 'But what I want to make out is, what *I* am to get out of it.'

'Virtue is its own reward,' replied Miss Celie, sententiously, 'and, besides, you make love to that sort of person so well, that it is evident you must have had a great deal of practice.'

'Now I call that a little hard on me,' said the Junior Partner, who felt that he had made a martyr of himself all the evening, and that he had, indeed, narrowly escaped the sacrificial altar.

'Wait,' he said threateningly, 'till you want me to do anything else of the kind for you.'

Celie Tennant set her pretty head the least bit to the side.

It could not be called a cock, but it was the next thing to it. Next she pursed her mouth till it looked like a cherry.

'You would do it just as quick if I asked you to do it all over again,' said Celie Tennant, looking pins and needles at Donald Iverach, till the very palms of his hands pingled.

The Junior Partner stamped his foot.

'Oh, hang it all!' he cried, 'I believe that's the God's truth—I would.'

That night as he walked home, the Junior Partner, who had no gifts for the imparting of religious instruction, but who respected those who had (especially if they were pretty), wondered what could make a Sunday-school teacher act in such a perverse manner. He could not understand how it was that Celie Tennant, who upon occasion would weep over the crushing of a fly, and who was all the time worrying her life out over these young rascals of hers, could yet take pleasure in tormenting a fellow-creature, and making his very existence a burden to him.

But when he came to think of it afterwards, he had to confess that on the whole he rather liked it. In fact, that he would rather be made unhappy by Celie Tennant than that anyone else should give him the happiness of Paradise. He was a rankly foolish young man, and he would have hugged his follies if this particular one would have permitted him.

The present chronicler has, be it understood, undertaken to relate the adventures of Cleg's companions as well as those which immediately concern the hero. But these adventures of Cleaver's boy and his Janet of Inverness were not without direct bearing upon the fates of Cleg and of his lost friends the Kayannahs. For it so happened that Duncan Urquhart, the uncle of Janet of Inverness, came one night to see her in the kitchen of Bailie Holden. The cook was pleased with him, for he was a single man and well bearded; in fact, the very kind of man whom all cooks adore. Housemaids, on the other hand, like clean-shaven or moustached men, and as a rule prefer to catch them younger. And this is the reason why cooks marry gardeners while housemaids marry coachmen. While nurses, having had enough of children, live to a good old age in picturesque cottages, with assured pensions and uncertain tempers, eventually dying old maids. At least, so sayeth the philosopher.

Duncan Urquhart was not the chief of a clan. He was an engine-driver in the goods department of the Greenock and South-

Eastern Railway. In the course of conversation the engine-driver, chiefly for the sake of the applause of the cook, cast about him for moving tales of the iron road on which his working hours were passed. He had settled in his mind that the cook was a wonderful woman. She could, to his certain knowledge, watch a roast, turn an omelette, taste a soup, and cast a languishing glance over her shoulder at him, all at the same time. He could not help thinking how excellent a thing it would be to come home after a grimy run on the footplate. And then, having washed, sit down in his own house to the soup, the omelette, and the joint, with (so little did he know) as many of the languishing glances as he could wish for, thrown in as a permanent asset of his home. So overcome was he by the idea, that for the moment he forgot that matters had proceeded even further with another cook in the town of Netherby, which formed his alternate stopping-place. It was a pity, he sometimes thought (for an instant only), that the laws of his country did not permit two such homes to be set up, one at either end of his daily journeyings.

Now, as one good effect of Duncan Urquhart's visit to the kitchen of Bailie Holden, the position of Janet of Inverness as kitchenmaid was made a far more tolerable one. It is a thing strongly advisable, that if the junior domestics of a house have presentable brothers or even uncles, unmarried and eligible, they should make haste to produce them. Janet of Inverness quite understood this. She knew, indeed, that Duncan was to marry his cousin Mary in the Black Isle. But she was far too wise a little girl to say anything about a family arrangement like that. And then the cook always allowed her to walk in pleasanter places for several days after the visits of her Uncle Duncan, who, as has been said, was a handsome man with a beard, and in habit very well put on and desirable.

But it is with Duncan's story that we have to do. Duncan had the English of Inverness crossed with the dialect peculiar to the Greenock and South-Eastern—a line whose engines are apple-green and gold, but the speech of whose engineers is blue, with purple patches. Not that Duncan swore before ladies, though Bailie Holden's cook would have forgiven him because of his beard. It was indeed a habit she was rather partial to, thinking it a mighty offset to the conversation of bearded men. There was no denying that Duncan's speech was picturesque. But Cleg could not help feeling that swearing of Duncan's sort was altogether

roundabout and unmanly. For himself, when he had need and occasion, he simply said 'Dam' and had done with it. Anything more savoured of superfluity to a boy of his simple tastes.

Duncan the engine-driver was talking about feats of strength.

'In my young days,' he said, 'I could toss the caber with any man. The Black Deil o' Dumfries tak' me, gin I couldna send a young tree birlin' through the air as if it had been a bit spale board. But ye should see Muckle Alick doon at Netherby Junction, where I pit up for the nicht. He's the porter there on the passenger side. An' the mid steeple is no better kenned for twenty miles round Netherby. Hands like the Day o' Judgment comin' in a thunder-cloud—heart like a wee white-faced lammie on the braes o' the Black Isle—that's Muckle Alick o' Netherby.

'As braid across the breast as if he was the gable end o' a bakehouse coming linkin' doon the street its lane. Lord bless me, when the big storm blew doon the distant signals last spring, I declare gin Muckle Alick didna juist stand on the railway brig that sits end on to the Market Hill, and signal in the trains wi' arms like the cross trees o' a man-o'-war!

'I declare to conscience it's a Guid's truth!

'Aye, an' when that puir trembling chicken-hearted cowl, Tam Mac Wheeble, that drives the Port Andrew passenger, stood still, wi' the bull's-eyes o' his wee blue engine juist looking round the corner, an' whistled and yelled for the proper signal, pretendin' that he didna see Muckle Alick (him belongin' to anither kirk), Alick cried doon at him off the brig, so that they could hear him half a mile, "Ye donnert U. P., come on wi' your auld steam-roller an' your ill-faured cargo o' Irish drovers, or I'll come doon an' harl ye a' in mysel'!"

'Fac' as daith! I was there, talkin' to a nice bit lass that stands in the Refresh'!

'You weakly toon-bred loons' (here Duncan Urquhart looked at Cleg and Cleaver's boy) 'thinks me a strong man. But Alick, though his shooders are gettin' a wee bowed and his craw-black hair is noo but a birse o' grey, could tak' half-a-dozen like me and daud our heads thegither till we couldna speak. True as the "Reason Annexed" to the Third Commandment! I hae seen him wi' thae een that's in my head the noo!'

'Tell us mair,' said Cleg, standing with his mouth open, for the relation of feats of strength is every unlearned man's 'Iliad.' So Duncan went on to tell mighty things of the wrath of Muckle Alick.

'But, lads, ye maun ken Alick is no a ramblin' wastrel like the rest o' us. He's an elder amang the Cameronians. Haith! a weel-learned man is Alick, an' guid company for a minister—or any other man. And never an ill word oot o' the mouth o' him. Na, no even when yince there was twa trains at different platforms, an' the station-maister cried to Alick to tak' the tickets frae baith o' them at the same time. "Juist tak' the Port Road train yoursel', gin ye are in sic a fidge!" quoth Alick. An' it was the station-maister that swore—Alick was even mair pleased-like than usual.

'But nae man ever saw Muckle Alick angry. The ill-set callants o' the Clearin' Hoose tries whiles to provoke him. Alick, he says little—only looks at them like a big sleepy dog when the pups are yelping. Then after a while he says, "Ye are like Tam Purdy's cat, when it ate the herrin' he had for his breakfast the time he was askin' the blessin', ye are 'gettin' rather pet!'"

'And then, if they winna take a telling, Alick will grip them in his loofs, gie them a shake and a daud thegither as if he was knockin' the stour aff a couple o' books, syne stick their heads in a couple o' bags o' Indian meal, an' leave them wi' their heels in the air. But Alick is never oot o' temper. And ceevil—fresh kirned butter is no sweeter at eighteenpence a pund!'

ADVENTURE XXIX.

MUCKLE ALICK'S BANNOCKBURN.

'BUT what was I gaun to tell ye? Oh, aboot the Irish drovers. Ye maun ken they are no a very weel-liked class doon aboot Netherby. For they come in squads to the Market Hill on Mondays, and whiles their tongues and their sticks are no canny. Though some, I'm no denyin', are ceevil chiels. But them that I'm gaun to tell ye aboot were no that kind.

'It was the middle o' the day and Alick was away for his denner. There had been a bad market that day. Baith the marts were through hours afore their usual. So the drovers swarmed up to the station to get the afternoon train for Port Andrew. And on the platform the drinkin' frae bottles an' the swearin' was fair extraordinar'! So I am telled. Then, when the train cam' in, there was eight or nine o' the warst o' them that wadna be served

but they maun a' get into a first-class compartment. And oot o' that they wadna get!

'The station-maister was a young man then and newly gotten on. He thocht a heap o' himsel'—as a young station-maister aye does when he first gets on the stemmed bonnet, and comes oot frae the office like Lord Almichty wi' a pen ahint his lug.

'Weel, at ony rate, the Netherby station-maister was that kind. An' he was determined that naebody should cross him in his ain station.

"'I'll juist lock them in and let them fecht it oot," said the guard, "and by the time we are through the big cutting at the Stroan they'll hae shuggled doon as quait as a session."

'It was doubtless good advice. But the station-maister was mainly angered. He gaed to the door o' the compartment and threatened the drovers wi' the law. And they juist pelted him wi' auld sodgers and ill talk. Then he cried for a' the porters and clerks, till there was a knot o' ten or a dozen o' them aboot the door—and a' the folk in the train wi' their heads oot o' the windows, askin' what on earth (an' ither places) was keepin' the train. And doon the main line the express was fair whustling blue-fire and vengeance because the signals were against her. But nae farther could they get. The station-maister he was determined to hae the drovers oot. And they were as set no to come—being gye and weel filled wi' the weedow's cheapest market whusky that she keepit special for the drovers, for faith it wad hae scunnert a decent Heelant sow! I tried it yince and was I the waur o't for a fortnicht. But ony whusky is guid enough for an Irishman, if only ye stir plenty o' soot amang it! They think they're hame again if they get that.

'So here the hale traffic o' Netherby Junction was stelled for maybe a quarter o' an hour, and the station-maister was nearly daft to think what he wad hae to enter on his detention sheet. A' at ance somebody cries, "Here's Muckle Alick coming up the street." And sure enough there he was, coming along by the hill dyke wi' his hands in his pooches. For ye see this wasna his train, and he had ten minutes to spare. So wi' that the station-maister and the guaird and half-a-dozen lads frae the offices rins to the far side o' the platform, waving on Alick and crying on him to come on. Alick he juist looks aboot to see wha was late for the train. But no' seein' onybody he steps leisurely along, drawin' on his weel-gaun pipe, proud-like as ye hae seen an elephant at the head o' a show.

'And the mair they cried and waved, the mair Alick looked about him for the man that was late for the train.

"It maun be the provost at the least, wi' a' this fuss," said he to himself; "he'll be gaun to Loch Skerrow to fish!"

'At last a wee upsettin' booking-clerk, the size o' twa scrubbers, cam rinning and telled Alick a' aboot the drovers and the state the station-maister was in.

"I'm no on duty at this train," says Alick, "but I'll come and speak to them."

'So they made way for him, and Alick gaed through the crowd at the platform like a liner through the herring-fleet below the Tail o' the Bank.

"Lads," says he to the drovers, "what's this?—what's this?"

'Then they mocked and jeered at him. For it so happened that nane o' them had been often at Netherby Market, and so no a man o' them was acquaint wi' Muckle Alick. Providence was no kind to the Paddies that time whatever.

"Boys," says Alick, as canny as if he had been courtin' his lass, "this wull never do ava', boys. It's no nice conduct! It's clean ridiculous, ye ken. Ye'll hae to come oot o' that, boys!"

'But they were fair demented wi' drink and pridefulness at keepin' the trains waitin', and so they miscaa'ed Alick for a muckle nowt-beast on stilts. And yin o' them let on to be an auctioneer, and set Alick up for sale.

"Hoo muckle for this great lumbering Galloway stirk?" says he.

"Thrip!" says another, "and dear at the money."

"Boys," says Alick again, like a mither soothin' her weans when she hears the guidman's fit, "Boys, ye'll hae to come oot!"

'But they only swore the waur at him.

"Aweel," says Alick, "mind I hae warned ye, boys——"

'And he made for the carriage-door in the face o' a yell like a' Donnybrook broken lowse. Then what happened after that it is no' juist easy to tell. Alick gaed oot o' sicht into the compartment, fillin' the door frae tap to bottom. There was a wee bit buzzing like a bee-skep when a wasp gets in. Then presently oot o' the door o' the first-class carriage there comes a hand like the hand o' Providence, and draps a kickin' drover on the platform, sprawlin' on his wame like a paddock. Then, afore he can gather himsel' thegither, oot flees anither and faa's richt across him—and so on till there was a decent pile o' Irish drovers, a' neatly stacked cross-

and-across like sawn wood in a joiner's yaird. Certes, it was bonny to see them ! They were a' cairded through yin anither, and a' crawling and grippin' and fechtin' like crabs in a basket. It was a heartsome sicht !

' Then, after the hindermost was drappit featly on the riggin,' oot steps Muckle Alick—edgeways, of course, for the door wasna wide aneuch for him except on the angle. He was, if onything, mair calm and collected than usual. Muckle Alick wasna angry. He juist clicked his square key in the lock o' the door and stood lookin' doon at the crawlin' pile o' drovers. Folk says he gied a bit smile, but I didna see him.

' " Ye see, boys, ye had to come oot ! " said Muckle Alick.'

ADVENTURE XXX.

HOW GEORDIE GRIERSON'S ENGINE BROKE ITS BUFFER.

' HOO-R-RAY ! ' shouted Cleg Kelly and Cleaver's boy together, till the cook and little Janet of Inverness smiled at their enthusiasm.

' But there's mair,' said the engine-driver.

' It canna be better than that ! ' said Cleg, to whom the tale was as good as new potatoes and salt butter.

' It's better ! ' said the engine-driver, who knew that nothing holds an audience and sharpens the edge of its appetite better than a carefully cultivated expectancy.

' It was that same day after the Port Andrew train got away, when the cowed drovers were sent to the landing-bank to wait for their cattle train, and the carriage that was coupled on to it for their transport. The driver o' the main line express was Geordie Grierson, an' he was no well-pleased man to be kept waitin' twenty minutes with his whistle yellyhooiin' bluefire a' the time. He prided himsel' special on rinnin' to the tick o' the clock. So as soon as the signal droppet to clear he started her raither sharp, and she cam' into the station under a head of steam some deal faster than he had intended. Ye could hae heard the scraichin' o' the auld wood brakes a mile an' mair. But stop her they couldna. And juist as Geordie Grierson's engine was turnin' the curve to come past the facing points to the platform, what should we see but a wee bit ragged laddie, carryin' a bairn, coming staggerin' cross the metals to the near bank. Every single person on the platform cried to him to gang back. But the laddie couldna see Geordie's engine for

the way he was carryin' the bairn, and maybe the noise o' the folk cryin' mazed him. So there he stood on the four-foot way, richt between the rails, and the express-engine fair on him.

'It cam' that quick our mouths were hardly shut after crying out, and our hearts had nae time to gang on again, before Muckle Alick, wha was standin' by the side o' the platform, made a spang for the bairns—as far as we could see, richt under the nose o' the engine. He gripped them baith in his airms, but he hadna time to loup clear o' the far rail. So Muckle Alick juist arched a back that was near as braid as the front of the engine itsel', and he gied a kind o' jump to the side. The far buffer o' the engine took him in the broad o' his hinderlands and whammeled him and the bairns in a heap ower on the grass on the far bank.

'Then there was a sough amang us wi' the drawing in o' sae mony breaths, for, indeed, we never looked for yin o' them ever to stir again. Geordie Grierson managed to stop his train after it had passed maybe twenty yairds. He was leanin' oot o' the engine cubby half his length an' lookin' back, wi' a face like chalk, at Muckle Alick and the weans on the bank.

'But what was oor astonishment to see him rise up wi' the bairns baith in his ae airm, and gie his back a bit dust wi' the back o' the ither as if he had been dustin' flour off it.

"Is there ocht broken, think ye, Geordie?" Muckle Alick cried anxiously to the engine-driver.

"Guid life, Alick, are ye no killed?" said the engine-driver. And, loupin' frae his engine, Geordie ran doon, if ye will believe it, greeting like a very bairn. And 'deed, to tell the truth, so was the maist feck o' us.

"Killed?" says Alick; "weel, no that I ken o'!"

'And he stepped across the rails wi' the twa weans laughin' in his airms, for a' bairns are fond o' Alick. And says he, "I think I'll pit them in the left luggage office till we get the express cleared." So he did that, and gied them his big turnip watch to play wi'. And syne he took the luggage over and cried the name o' the station, as if he had done nocht that day forbye eat his denner.

'Then there cam' a lassie rinnin', wi' a loaf in her airms, and lookin' every road for something.

"Did ye see twa bairns? Oh, my wee Hugh, what's come to ye?" she cried.

"Ye'll find them in the luggage office, I'm thinkin', lassie," says Alick.'

And here the engine-driver of the goods train rose to depart. But his audience would not permit him.

'And what cam' o' the bairns?' cried Cleg, white with anxiety, 'and what was their names, can ye tell me?'

'Na, I never heard their names, if they had ony,' said Duncan Urquhart. 'They were but tinkler weans, gaun the country. But Alick could tell ye, nae doot. For I saw him gang doon the street wi' the wee boy in his hand, and the lass carryin' the bairn. An' the folk were a' rinnin' oot o' their doors to shake hands wi' Alick, and askin' him if he wasna sair hurt?'

'"Na," says he; "I'll maybe a kennin' stiff for a day or twa, but there's nocht serious wrang—except wi' the spring o' the engine buffer! That's gye sair shauchelt!"

'And guid nicht to ye a', an' a guid sleep. That's a' I ken,' said Duncan Urquhart from the kitchen door, where he was saying good-bye to the cook in a manner calculated to advance materially the interests of his niece, Janet of Inverness.

'And I'm gaun the morn's mornin' to see Muckle Alick!' cried Cleg. And he went out with the engine-driver.

ADVENTURE XXXI.

THE 'AWFU' WOMAN.'

A SORE heart had Vara Kavannah as she sat in the hut in Callendar's yard the night her mother had appeared at the gate of Hillside Works.

'I can never go back among them—no, never, never!' said Vara to herself again and again.

And already she saw the sidelong glance, the sneering word thrown over the shoulder, as the companions from whom she had held herself somewhat aloof reminded her of her mother's disgrace. 'O father, father, come back to us—come back to us!' she cried over and over again till it became a prayer.

She sat with her hands before her face so long that little Hugh repeatedly came and stirred her arm, saying 'What ails sister? Hugh Boy not an ill boy!'

Vara Kavannah's thoughts ran steadily on Liverpool, to which her father had gone to find work. She remembered having seen trains with carriages marked 'Liverpool' starting from the rickety

old station at the end of Princes Street. She knew that they went out by Merchiston and Calder. That must, therefore, be the way to Liverpool. Vara did not remember that it must also be the way to a great many other places, since many carriages with other superscriptions passed out the same way.

As it darkened in the little construction hut, Vara listlessly rose to set the room to rights, and to give the baby its bottle. Nothing now seemed any use, since her mother had come back into her life. Yet Vara did not cry, for that also was no use. She had lost her place at the works, or at least she could never go back any more. Her world was at an end.

Hugh Boy still lingered outside, though it was growing latish, and the swallows that darted in and out of the stacked rafters and piled squares of boards began one by one to disappear from the vaulted sky. Hugh was busy watering the plants, as he had seen Cleg do. And he kept one hand in his pocket and tried to whistle as like his model as possible. Vara was just laying the baby in its cot when she heard a scream of pain from Hugh at the door.

'Mercy me!' said she, 'has the laddie tumbled and hurt himself?'

She flew to the open door, which was now no more than a dusky oblong of blue-grey. A pair of dark shapes stood in front of her. Little Hugh lay wailing on the ground. A hard clenched hand struck Vara on the mouth, as she held up her hands to shield the baby she had carried with her in her haste, and a harsh thick voice screamed accumulated curses at her.

'I hae gotten ye at last, ye scum, you that sets yourself up to be somebody. You that dresses in a hat and feather, devil sweep ye! Come your ways in, lad, and we will soon take the pride out of the likes o' her, the besom!'

The man hung back and seemed loth to have part in the shame. But Sal Kavannah seized him by the hand and dragged him forward.

'This is your new faither, Vara,' she said; 'look at him. He is a bonny-like man beside your poor waff wastrel runnagate faither, Sheemus Kavannah!'

The man of whom Sal Kavannah spoke was a burly low-browed ruffian, with the furtive glance of one who has never known what it is to have nothing to conceal.

But Vara thought he did not look wholly bad.

'Come in, mother!' she said at last in a low voice. Then she

went out to seek for Boy Hugh, who had run into the dark of the yard and darned himself safely among the innumerable piles of wood, which stood at all angles and elevations in Callendar's wide quadrangle.

'Hugh! Boy Hugh!' she cried. And for a long time she called in vain. At last a low and fearful voice answered her from a dark corner, in which lay the salvage of a torn-down house.

'Is she gane away?' said the Boy Hugh.

'No, but ye are to come hame,' said Vara, holding the babe closer to her bosom.

'Then Hugh Boy is no comin' hame the nicht till the "awfu' woman" is gane away!' said the lad, determinedly.

'Come, boy, come,' she said again; 'my heart is wae for us a'. But come wi' your Vara!'

'Na, Hugh Boy is no comin'. Ye will hae to *hist* me oot wi' big dogs afore I will come hame to the "awfu' woman," said Hugh Boy, who was mightily set when his mind was made up.

So Vara had perforce to drag her feet back to the horrors which awaited her within the construction hut. The man and her mother had been pledging one another when she entered. A couple of black bottles stood between them, and Sal Kavannah looked up at her daughter with a fleeing laugh.

'Aye, here she comes that sets up for being better than your mother! But we'll show you before we are through with you, my man and me, you——'

However it does not enter into the purpose of this tale to blacken a page with the foul excrement of a devilish woman's hate of her own child. The Scripture holdeth—the mother may forget. She may indeed have no compassion on the child of her womb. And Vara Kavannah sat still and listened, till the burning shame dulled to a steady throbbing ache somewhere within her. The woman's threats of future torture and outrage passed idly over her, meaningless and empty. The man drank steadily, and grew ever silenter and more sullen; for, to his credit be it said, the situation was not to his taste, and he looked but seldom at Vara. The girl sat clasping the babe to her bosom with a secret sense that in little Gavin she had her best and indeed her only protector. For even the very bad man in his senses will hardly hurt an infant—though a bad woman will, as we may read in the records of our police courts.

So Vara sat till the man reeled to the door carrying the

unfinished bottle with him, and Sal Kavannah, her orgie logically completed, sank in a fœtid heap on the floor with the empty one beside her.

The man as he stumbled out left the door open, and in a little while Vara could hear Boy Hugh's plaintive voice, asking from the wood-pile in the corner whether the 'awfu' woman' was gone yet.

As Vara sat and listened all through the short hours of that midsummer night to the clocks of the city churches, the stertorous breathing of her mother and the babe's occasional feeble wail were the only sounds within the hut itself. But Boy Hugh's plaint detached itself fitfully from the uneasy hum of the midnight city without. A resolve, new-born indeed, but seemingly old and determinate as the decrees of the God she had learned about in the Catechism, took hold upon her.

It seemed to Vara that it did not matter if she died—it did not even matter whether Hugh and Gavin died, if only she could find her father, and die far away from her mother and all this misery.

The girl was so driven to the last extremity by the trials of the day and the terrors of the night that she rose and put on her hat as calmly as though she had been going for a walk with Cleg and the children across the park. As calmly also she made her preparations, stepping carefully to and fro across her mother on the floor. She put all the scraps of bread that were left from Cleg's windfall into her pocket, together with the baby's feeding bottle and a spare tube. Then she added Hugh's whistle and a certain precious whip with a short bone handle and a long lash, which Cleg had given him. Vara was sure that Hugh Boy would cry for these, and want to go back if she did not take them with her. She had nothing of her own to take, except the indiarubber umbrella ring which Cleg Kelly had given her. So she took that, though she had never possessed an umbrella in her life. Groping in Gavin's crib, she found her shawl, and wrapped it about her with a knowing twist. Then she deftly took up the baby. The shawl went over her left shoulder and was caught about her waist at the right side, in a way which all nurses and mothers know, but which no man can ever hope to describe. The babe was still asleep, and Vara's tender touch did not awake it as she stepped out into the night to walk to Liverpool to find her father.

But as a first step she must find Boy Hugh. And that young man was exceedingly shy. He had got it in his obstinate little head that his sister wished to drag him back to the 'awfu' woman.'

It was not, therefore, till Vara had managed to persuade him in the most solemn way that she had no intention of ever going back that he consented to accompany her upon her desperate quest.

At last Boy Hugh took her hand and the three bairns left Callendar's yard behind them for ever. What happened there that night after they left we already know. It is with the children's wanderings that we now have to do.

ADVENTURE XXXII.

MAID GREATHEART AND HER PILGRIMS.

It was grey day when the children fared forth from the city. Vara's chief anxiety was lest they should not be able to escape out of the town before the light came, so that some officious neighbour might be able to direct her enemy upon their track. It was not long before they emerged out of the side-alleys on a broad paved street which led towards the south.

Vara paused and asked a policeman if this was the way to Liberton.

'And what are you going to do at Liberton so early in the morning?' said the policeman. He asked because he was a Lothian man, who always puts a second question before he can bring himself to answer the first.

'We are gaun to see our faither,' said Vara, speaking the truth.

'Weel,' said the policeman, 'that is the road to Liberton. But if I was you I would wait till the milk-cairts were drivin' hame. Then I could get ye a lift to Liberton fine.'

He was a kind-hearted 'poliss,' and in fact the same officer who had looked over the screen by the watch-shelter behind which Tyke was spinning his yarns to Cleg Kelly.

So that—thus strange is the working of events when they take the reins into their own hands—at the very moment when Cleg Kelly was sleeplessly turning over in his mind the problem of the life-fate of Vara and the children by the dying fire at the Grange crossing, Vara herself with the baby on her arm was trudging down the pavement opposite. As she passed she looked across, and only the timbered edge of the shelter prevented her from seeing Cleg Kelly.

Thus, without the least hindrance or observation, the three

children escaped out of their thrice-heated fiery furnace into the cool of the country hedges and upon the clean hard surface of the upland roads.

With the inevitable instinct of hunted things Vara turned aside whenever she heard the brisk clapper of the hoofs of a milk-cart, or the slower rumble of a market waggon. For she knew that it was of such early comers into the city that questions would be asked. So, when Cleg set about his inquisition, he was foiled by the very forethought which had only desired to defeat an enemy, not to mystify a friend.

Thus hour by hour they left quiet, kindly red-tiled villages behind, set in heartsome howes and upon windy ridges. And, as they went ever forwards, morning broadened into day; day crept dustily forward to hot noon; noon drowsed into afternoon, with the scent of beanfields in the air, dreamily sweet. Vara's arm that held the baby grew numb and dead. Her back ached acutely from the waist downwards as though it would break in two. Sometimes the babe wailed for food. Little Hugh dragged leadenly upon her other hand, and whinged on, with the wearisome iteration of the cornercrake, that he wished to go back to Callendar's yard, till Vara had to remind him, because nothing else would stay his plaining, of the 'awfu' woman' waiting for him there.

Vara did not rest long that whole day. They sat down as seldom as possible, and then only for a few minutes. Vara poured a little of the water from a wayside spring upon the crumbs that were left, and gave them to little Gavin, mixing them with the remaining milk in his bottle. Hugh begged incessantly that Vara would let him take off his boots and walk barefoot. But his sister knew that he would certainly become lame in a mile or two. Yet there might have been pleasure in it too, for they sat down in the pleasantest places all that fine, bough-tossing day. The shadows were sprinkled on the grassy hillsides, like a patchwork quilt which Vara had once seen in their house when Hugh was very little, but which had long ago become only a memory and a lost pawn-ticket.

Never before had the children seen such quaint woodland places—nooks where the rabbits tripped and darted, or sat on the bank washing faces pathetically innocent and foolish. Little runnels of water trickled down the gullies of the banks and dived under the road. But for Vara there was no enjoyment, no resting all that day. They soon spent their store of food. By noon Hugh had eaten all the cold potatoes. The babe had taken, at first with difficulty,

then, under the pressure of hunger, greedily, the thin water and milk with the crushed crumbs in it which Vara had made at the brook-side. So that also was finished. Hunger began, not for the first time, to grip them.

But they could not rest long. In a little, just as Hugh Boy was beginning to drop asleep and lean heavily against Vara, there came again upon her without warning a terrible fear. She looked down the road they had come, and she seemed to see the cruel eyes of her mother, to hear again the foul threats of the life she was to be compelled to lead for 'setting herself up to be better than her mother,' all the words which she had listened to during those last hours of terror and great darkness in the old construction hut.

So Vara shook Hugh awake, stroking his cheeks down gently till his eyes opened. She settled the shawl over her other shoulder, and the bairns were soon on their way again. The dusty road beneath appeared to stream monotonously between their feet, and so weary did they grow that sometimes they seemed to be only standing still. Sometimes, on the contrary, they appeared to be going forward with incredible speed. Vara bore the aching of her carrying-arm till it became agony unspeakable, and the weight of Gavin dragged on her very brain. Then, for a treat, she would shift him to the other arm, and for a few minutes the keen twingeing ache deadened to a dull ache, as the tired wrist and elbow dropped to her side. But soon in the other arm the same stounding agony began.

Still the children fared on, spurred forward by the fear of that which was behind them. The thought and hope of their father had greatly died out of Vara's mind, though not altogether. But the mighty instinct of hiding from days and nights like those which had gone over her head recently drove her restlessly forward. Yet she began sadly to acknowledge that, though she might be able to stumble on a little longer that night, little Hugh could not go much further. He began to lag behind at every turn, and whenever they stopped a moment he fairly dropped asleep on his feet, and his head fell flaccidly against her side.

The bells of a little town on the slope of a hill were just striking six and the mill-folk were streaming homeward, when the children had their first great piece of luck. They were just by a stone watering-trough at the curve of a long brae, when a smart light cart with yellow wheels came past. It was driven by a young man, who sat, looking very bright and happy, with his sweetheart beside him. As the pair came slowly up the brae they had been

talking about the children, whom they could see dragging on before them weary-foot, sick with pain and weariness.

Perhaps the young man's heart was touched. Or mayhap his sweetheart asked him to give them a penny, and he wished to show his generosity. But in either case certain it is that as he passed up the hill he nodded brightly back to the children and threw them a coin. It rolled on its edge to Vara's feet, who stooped and picked it up, solacing her independent soul as the silver lay apparent in her hands by telling herself that she had not asked for it. Her mother had found all her savings the night before, and had emptied them into the hand of her companion, out of the cup in which they had stood on the shelf which served for the mantel-piece of the construction hut. So that but for this happy young man's sixpence Vara and her charges were absolutely penniless.

ADVENTURE XXXIII.

THE BABES IN THE HAYSTACK.

BUT even Hugh brightened at the sight of the silver, and when Vara proposed to go back and buy something for them while he stayed with Gavin and gathered him flowers to play with, the lad said determinedly, 'Hugh Boy come too!'

So they all went back to the village. They stood looking long and wistfully into the shop-windows, for what to buy was so momentous a question that it took them some time to decide. At last Vara made up her mind to have twopence-worth of stale bread at a baker's. She was served by the baker's wife, who, seeing the girl's weary look, gave her a fourpenny loaf of yesterday's baking for her coppers, together with some salt butter in a broad cabbage leaf into the bargain. Vara's voice broke as she thanked the woman, who had many bairns of her own, and knew the look of trouble in young eyes. Then at another shop Vara bought a pennyworth of cheese, which (as she well knew) satisfies hunger better than any other food. Then came a pennyworth of milk for the baby, with which she filled his bottle, and gave what was over to Hugh Boy, who drank it out of the shopkeeper's measure.

When the children came out, Vara took Hugh by the hand, and they marched past the baker's without stopping. For the boy had set his love upon a certain gingerbread lion with a pair of lacklustre eyes of currants, and as they passed the baker's shop he

set up a whining whimper to have it. But his sister marched him swiftly past before the dews in his eyes had time to fall. The baker's wife had come to the door to look after them, and seeing Hugh Boy's backward-dragging look, she sent her little girl after them with the very gingerbread lion of Hugh's dreams. Hugh Boy stood speechless, open-mouthed with thankfulness. The little girl smiled at his surprise.

'We hae lots o' them at our house,' she said, and hurried back to her mother.

They mounted the hill once more and sat on the grassy bank by the side of the watering trough, into which a bright runlet of water fell, and in which little stirring grains of sand dimpled and danced.

Never was anything sweeter than the flavour of yesterday's bread, except the gingerbread lion, from which Hugh had already picked one black currant eye, leaving a yellow pitted socket which leered at him with horrid suggestiveness of stomach-ache. But hunger-ache was Hugh Boy's sole enteric trouble, so that the suggestion was lost upon him.

The water of the hill spring, splashing into the stone trough, sounded refreshing beyond expressing. The baby dreamed over his bottle, and lay with his eyes fixed on the clear heavens above—from which, if all tales be true, he had come to a world of whose kindness he had had so little experience since his arrival.

For the first time that day Vara took a bite for herself and many a draught of the dimpling springwater, whose untiring crystal rush into the basin it was so pleasant to watch. Then Vara washed Hugh's feet and her own in the overflow of the trough, just at the place where the burn ran under the road. On Hugh Boy's feet was a painful pink flush, but no blister appeared. On her own feet, however, there were two or three. Vara was glad that Hugh was fit for his journey.

They started again, and, with the refreshment of the food and the rest, they managed to make two or three miles further before the dark fell. But soon it was evident that the three wanderers could go little further that night. The babe's eyes were long closed with sleep, and poor little Hugh could only keep awake and stagger on by constantly rubbing his knuckles into the corners of his eyes.

They were now on a high wild moor, and there was no house within sight. They still went onward, however, blindly and painfully. The roadsides trailed past them black and indistinct till they came

to a farmhouse. They could see tall buildings against the skies and hear the lash of an unseen mill-stream over a wheel into a pool. A blackcap sang sweetly down in some reeds by the mill-dam.

Vara did not dare to knock at the door of the house. She was just about to go into the farmyard in search of a shed to lie down in, when she remembered that she had heard from Cleg how there were always fierce dogs about every farmhouse. For Hugh's sake she could not risk it. Instead of going forward, therefore, she groped her way with one hand into a field where there were many stacks of hay and corn. Vara could tell by the rustling as her hand passed over them. Soon she came to a great stack in a kind of covered shed, which stood between wooden posts like trees. One end of it was broken down and cut into platforms. Vara mounted upon one with the baby, and reached down a hand for Boy Hugh. For the last few miles, indeed ever since it grew dark, Hugh had been more than half asleep, and his weariful sobbing had worn down to a little clicking catch in his throat, which still recurred at intervals. It was by the sound that Vara found him. She leaned over as far as she dared, and drew him up beside her. He was asleep in her arms before she could lay him down.

Vara thought the people of the farm would not be very angry in the morning if she pulled out a little of the hay.

'It is for the baby's sake!' she said, to excuse herself.

So she scooped out of the higher step of the stack where it was broadest a little cave among the hay, and into this she thrust Boy Hugh gently, putting his legs in first and leaving only his head without. Then she rolled the babe and herself in the shawl and crawled in beside him. She drew the hay close like a coverlet about them. She listened awhile to Hugh Boy's breathing, which still had the catch of bygone tears in it. She kissed Gavin, closed her eyes, and instantly fell asleep herself. Vara said no prayers. But the incense of good deeds and sweetest essential service went up to God from that haystack.

ADVENTURE XXXIV.

THAT OF MARY BELL, BYRE LASS.

THE morning came all too soon, with a crowing of cocks and the clashing hurrahs of the rooks, circling up from their nesting in the tall trees. But the tired children slept on. The life of the farm

began about them, with its cheerful sounds of clinking head-chains as the cattle came in, and of tinkling harness as the teams went afield. But still the children did not wake. It was not till Mary Bell, byre lass, came to get an armful of fodder from the stack that they were found.

'Lord, preserve us! what's that?' she cried when, with her knees upon the step of the stack, she saw the children—Vara's wearied face turned to the babe, and the dew damp on the white cheeks of Boy Hugh.

'I maun fetch the mistress!' said Mary Bell.

And then these two women stood and marvelled at the children.

'Mary,' said the mistress of the farm, 'd'ye mind the text last Sabbath?'

Mary Bell looked indignantly at her employer.

'How do ye think I can mind texts wi' as mony calves to feed?' she asked, like one of whom an unfair advantage is taken.

'O Mary!' said her mistress, 'how often hae I telled you no to set your mind on the vainities o' this wicked world?'

'An' whatna ane do ye pay me for?—to keep mind o' texts or to feed the calves?' asked the byre lass, pertinently.

'Mary,' said the other, ignoring the argument, 'the text was this: "I will both lay me down and sleep"—dod, but I declare I forget the rest o't,' she concluded, breaking down with some ignominy.

'In the land o' the leal,' suggested Mary Bell, either wickedly or with a real desire to help. Her superior promptly accepted the emendation.

'That's it!' she said. 'Is it no bonny to look at thae bairns and mind the text, "I will both lay me down and sleep, in the land o' the leal"?''

'I'll wauken them,' said practical Mary Bell, 'and bring them into the hoose for some breakfast.'

'Na, na,' said her mistress, 'ye maunna do that. What wad the guidman say? Ye ken he canna be doin' wi' folk that gang the country. A wee drap o' yestreen's milk noo—or the scrapins o' the parritch pot!'

'Aye,' said Mary Bell, "'in the land o' the leal." Ye had better gang ben and look up the text, mistress; I'll attend to the bairns.'

'Aye, do that,' said the good wife, with perfect unconsciousness of Mary Bell's sarcasm, 'but be sparin'. Mind ye, this is hard times for farm folk! And we canna spend gear and graith recklessly on unkennd bairns.'

'Ye will be free o' that crime, mistress,' murmured Mary, as her mistress took her way into the house; 'gin ye could tak' a' that ye hae saved wi' ye, what a bien and comfortable doon-sitting wad ye no hae in heeven! Itherwise, I'm nane sae sure—in spite o' your texts.'

Then Mary sat down and took the children one by one, touching their faces to make them waken. Vara sat up suddenly, with wild eyes and a cry of fear. In her terror she clasped the baby so hard that it waked and cried. With the other hand she brushed away the elf locks about her own eyes. But her heart stilled its fluttering as she caught the kindly eyes of Mary Bell, set in a brown sun-coarsened face of broad good humour.

'O,' said Vara, 'I thought ye were my mother!'

And Mary Bell, who, though a byre lass and daughter of toil, was born with the gentle heart of courtesy within her, refrained from asking why this wandering girl should be so greatly afraid of her own mother.

'Are you hungry?' she said, instead.

And little Boy Hugh awoke, rolled out of the hay, and shook himself like a young puppy. He stretched his arms wide, clasping and unclasping his fingers.

'I'm *that* hungry!' he said, as if he had heard Mary Bell's words in a dream.

'That's answer enough!' said the byre lass. 'Certes, ye are a bonny laddie; come here to me.'

And Mary Bell, who was born to love children and to bear them, snatched him up and kissed him warmly and roughly. But Hugh wriggled out of her arms, and as soon as he found himself on the ground he wiped his mouth deliberately and ungratefully with the back of his hand.

'Hae ye ony pieces and milk for wee boys?' he said.

The byre lass laughed.

'Ye like pieces and milk better than kisses,' said she. 'Hoo does that come?'

'Pieces and milk are better for ye!' said Boy Hugh, stating an undeniable truth.

'It's a peety,' said Mary Bell, sententiously, 'that we dinna aye ken what's guid for us.' And she was thoughtful for some moments. 'Come awa', bairns,' she said, taking Gavin from Vara, and carrying him herself into a milk house, which was filled with a pleasant smell of curds and cheese.

Hugh Boy went wandering about, wondering at the great tin basins filled with milk to the brim, some fresh and white, and some covered smoothly with a thick yellow coating of cream.

'I never thoct there was as muckle milk in the world!' said Boy Hugh.

So here the children ate and drank, and were refreshed. And as she set before them each new dainty—farles of cake, thick new scones, milk with the cream still generously stirred amongst it, fresh new milk yet warm from the cow for Gavin, Mary Bell said: 'This is better than mindin' a text! Sirce me, heard ye ever the like o' it—"To the land o' the leal?"' An' she took it a' in. She reads a' the Bible ever she reads between her sleeps in the kirk, I'se warrant. Wait till I see Jamie Mailsetter; I'll hae a rare bar to tell him!'

It was an hour after, much comforted and refreshed, with a back-load of provisions and one of Mary Bell's hardly-earned shillings, that the wanderers set out. They continued to wave her their farewells till they were far down the loaning.

And they might well be sorry, for there were not many people so kind and strong-hearted as Mary Bell to be met with between the Town of Pilgrimage and the City of the Twelve Foundations. And some of these are rough-handed and weather-beaten men and women, who work out their Christianity in feeding calves and bairns instead of parading texts, keeping the word of God in their hearts according to the commandment.

ADVENTURE XXXV.

THE KNIGHT IN THE SOFT HAT.

AND so their second day was a good day, as most days are that are well begun with a good breakfast. For, together with a good conscience, that makes all the difference. And especially when you are Hugh Boy's age, for then even the conscience does not so much matter.

Hugh Boy had never been in the country before, and, being a lad of much observation, he had to watch all that there was there. And there were many things for Hugh Boy to see that day. Robin redbreasts peeped with their summer shyness upon them from the low bushes on the banks. Sparrows pecked among flower patches, instead of at the mud in the streets, as Hugh Boy

had always seen them do before. There was a big bird which floated above the farmyard of one of the farms they passed. Hugh wondered what sort of bird it could be. He heard a motherly hen, which had been scraping and clucking among the dust when they came round the corner, suddenly give a strange screech, just like that which Vara had given the other night when the 'awfu' woman' came to their door. He saw the hen droop her wings and crouch in the dust, keeping her beak up in the air, her timid eyes glittering with anger.

Hugh Boy questioned Vara, but Vara had the baby to attend to, and answered that it was just a bird. But soon the big shadow on the sky with the outstretched wings floated away, and the hen went back to its contented picking. The children also went along the wayside to-day with many more rests and lingerings. For they had no longer the instant spur of pursuit driving them on.

They stopped to take their meal by a little bridge, under which a moorland burn ran bickering down to join a big river which flowed to the distant sea.

They sat down in the dark of the arch, and Vara had spread out all the provision which her kind friend, Mary Bell, had given her before she saw that at the other end a young man was sitting close in by the wall. At sight of him Vara started, and would have put her bread and milk back again. But the man cried over to her, 'Not so fast, my pretty dears; there's another hungry stomach here.'

'You are welcome to a share o' what we have,' said Vara, who had been too often hungry herself not to know the pain it meant.

The youth came and sat down by them. He was a lean and unwholesome-looking vagrant. The whites of his eyes had turned an unpleasant lead colour, while the pupils were orange-coloured, like the stripes on a tiger's skin.

Vara gave him one of the largest of Mary Bell's scones, and some of the butter they had got from the baker's wife the day before. The young man ate these up greedily, and reached out his hand for more. Vara offered him some of the loaf which she had bought.

'None o' that dry choko-tuck for me; gimme the soft bread!' said he, rudely snatching at it.

Vara told him civilly that it was not for herself that she wanted to keep it, but to break up in the baby's milk.

In spite of her pitiful protest, however, the young man snatched

the scone and ate it remorselessly, looking at Vara all the time with evil eyes, and smiling a smirk of satisfaction. There was no snivelling weakness about him. Hugh Boy never took his eyes off him. Then, when he had finished, the lout rose, coolly stuffed the remainder of their provision into his pocket, and came over towards Vara with his hand stretched out. He caught her by the wrist and sharply twisted her arm.

'Shell out your tin,' he said. 'Out with it now, and no bones about it!'

Vara bore the pain as well as she could without crying out. Suddenly, however, the rascal dropped her hand, and snatched Gavin from her arms. He stood on the edge of the ravine over which the bridge went, holding the child, and threatened to throw him over if she did not give him all the money she had. He was, of course, as he told himself, only 'kidding' her, but Vara was in wild terror for Gavin. Her particular evil genius had never hesitated to carry out such threatenings.

'I will! I will!' cried Vara. And she took the byre lass's shilling out of her pocket and gave it to the man.

'Any more?' said he. 'Yes, I see there is. Out with it!'

And Vara drew out the remainder of the sixpence which the young lover had thrown to her from his cart yesterday.

Then the cruel hobbledehoy tossed her the child with a laugh, and sprang sharply round the parapet of the bridge. Pale as ivory, Vara ran after him to watch. The rascal was quite at his ease, for he stopped to light his pipe and take a drink out of a little square bottle. This he stowed away in the tails of his coat, which were very long. Then he waved his hand humorously at Vara and Boy Hugh as they stood by the arch of the bridge.

A tall, well-built young fellow, was coming down the road, and a hope sprang up in Vara's mind that he might do something for her. The stranger's round soft hat and dark clothes marked him for a clergyman. But he swung his stick and whistled, which were new things to Vara in one of his cloth.

At sight of him the thief pulled down the corners of his mouth and put on his regulation mendicant's whine.

'For the love o' God, sir, help a poor fellow that's dyin' o' hunger. I've walked fifty miles without a bite—hope to die if I haven't, sir. I wouldn't tell you a lie, sir.'

The stalwart young minister smiled, and gave his stick another swing before he spoke.

'You have not walked five miles without drinking, anyway, as my nose very plainly tells me. And your pipe is setting your coat on fire at this very moment!'

The hobbledehoy plucked his lighted pipe out of his pocket and set his thumb in the bowl.

'You are one o' the good kind,' he persisted; 'you are not the sort that would deny a poor chap a sixpence because he takes a draw of tobacco when he can get it?'

'Not a bit,' said the minister, good-humouredly; 'I can take a whiff myself. But I don't ask anybody else to pay for it. It's a fine business, yours, my lad. But I'm not keeping a free rum and tobacco shop. So you had best tramp, my man.'

At this the tramp began to pour forth a volley of the most foul-mouthed abuse, cursing all parsons for rogues, liars, and various other things. The minister listened patiently for some time.

'Now,' he said, when at last there came a pause, 'I have given you your say—away with you! And if I hear another foul word out of your mouth, I will draw my stick soundly across your back.'

'Oh!' said the other, impudently, 'I thought you were one of the softish kind—the sort that when you smote them on the one cheek, turned the other also.'

The young man in the round hat squared his shoulders.

'Did anyone smite me on the one cheek?' he asked. 'If they did, I didn't know it. Perhaps you would like to try?'

And he came nearer to the rascal, who drew off as if not at all inclined to make the experiment. He made no reply.

'But,' said the minister, 'since you are so ready with your Scripture, you will not object to another text, just as good, and more suitable for application to the like of you. It is—"A rod for the fool's back!"'

And with that he lifted his stick and brought it down on the young rough's shoulders with the swing of a cricketer cutting a high ball to the boundary.

Never was there a more astonished scoundrel. He turned on the instant and ran. But Vara was close beside them by this time.

'He stole my money!' she cried; 'catch him! O dinna let him away!'

The young minister clapped his hat firmly on the back of his head and gave chase. The thief was for the moment the swifter, but he had not the wind nor the training of his opponent.

'Stop!' cried the pursuer.

The thief glanced about, and seeing the stick he had tasted before hovering in the air, he dropped in a heap across the path to trip his pursuer. The minister cleared him in his stride and turned upon him. The rascal kept perfectly still till his captor approached. Then suddenly he shot out his foot in a vicious kick. But the young fellow in the round hat had been in France and knew all about that game. He caught the foot in his hand and turned the fellow over on his back. Vara came panting up.

'Give this girl her money,' said the minister. 'How much was it, my lassie?'

'It was a shilling and two pence,' said Vara.

'Out with it or I'll go through you!' said the minister. And the thick stick again hovered an ultimatum.

So Vara got her money, and without even a parting curse the cowed and frightened rascal took himself off down the road at a slow trot, keeping his eyes on the ground all the way.

Vara was left alone with her knight of the soft hat.

ADVENTURE XXXVI.

THE MADNESS OF HUGH BOY.

THE young minister put out his hand to Vara and the two walked quietly back to where Boy Hugh was kneeling on the grass, and baby Gavin was sitting grasping a dandelion with one hand and looking with wide deep-set eyes of philosophic calm upon the world.

'Tell me all about it,' said her champion. And Vara told the tale, with her heart again beginning to beat with terror. 'But how is it that you are here?' said he. And Vara explained as much as she could.

'To look for your father in Liverpool?' he said. 'It is a long, sad way—a terrible journey.' He mused.

He had a passion for setting things right, this young fellow, and it occurred to him that it would be a good thing if he could get these children into a home of some kind, and then communicate with the police on the subject of their father.

But as soon as the young man began to speak in his low, persuasive tones of a home where they could be safe and quiet, Vara stood up.

'O no, sir, I thank you, but we cannot bide. Somebody might come and find us.'

At the mere thought she began to tremble and hastily to put her scattered belongings together. The young minister made no further objection. He walked with them a little along the way, and before he parted from them he put another shilling into Vara's hand. Then he leaped over the stone dyke on his way to a farmhouse where there was a sick man waiting for him. From the other side of the fence he told Vara shyly to remember that she had another Father to care for her, who could always be found. But he was shy about saying so much, this remarkable young man. However, he had a high sense of duty, and he felt that the circumstances justified the observation.

'Thank ye,' said Vara; 'I'll no forget.'

This, their second day, had become one of brooding heat, and Vara was glad to have enough to buy a good meal for them all at the next little town they passed through. They were fortunate also in the afternoon, for at a little house by the wayside, a cottage with red creepers growing all along the wall, the mistress took them all in and gave them a cup of tea and some of the fresh white scones she was baking. There was milk too for little Gavin. And as they went away a thought seemed to strike the woman. She bade them wait a little while. She climbed up into the attic, and presently returned with a shawl, which she wrapped about Vara, and settled the baby into the nook of it with her own hands.

'But this is a good shawl. We must not take it from you,' said Vara.

'Nonsense,' said the good woman; 'it is a fair exchange. Leave me the auld ane; it will make very decent floor-clouts.'

So it was on the whole a good day for them. And it was not till late in the evening that misfortune again befell them. Vara's hands were usually so full of Gavin that she had little thought for anything else. But at one resting place she put her hand into her pocket and her heart stood still because she failed to find the slim coins upon which she had put her trust. She felt the pennies, but not the shilling or the sixpence. She laid Gavin down on the grass and turned the pocket inside out. There was nothing whatever there. But Vara found instead a little slit in the lining, and the thought of her great loss, together with what it meant to them all, turned her faint and sick.

'The man might just as well have had them after all,' she said.

Night fell with them still upon the road. They had found no friendly shelter, and they seemed to be alone on the wide moor, through which the road ran unfenced, like a tangle of string which has been loosely thrown down. Hugh Boy cried bitterly to be allowed to lie down. Vara looked about her anxiously and long. But she could see nothing but the wild moorish hilltops girdling the horizon, too like one another to give her any idea of the direction in which a habited house might lie. She only saw the slow twilight of midsummer in the north creeping down over the brown moors, and in the moist hollows of the bogs shallow pools of mist gathering.

For the distance, the sound of a voice was borne in the still air.

'Hurley, hurley, hie away hame!' it said. And Vara went to the top of a heathery knowe and called loudly. But only the moorbirds, making ready for bed, answered her. They flew round, circling and complaining, especially the peewits, which, being reassured by the small size of the three, came almost offensively near.

Boy Hugh filled his pockets with stones to drive them away. He also got out his whip. He had heard of the Babes in the Wood, and, being a sensible boy, he did not want any Robin Redbreast nonsense. It was not that he so much objected to die, but he felt the humiliation of being covered with leaves by the whaups. He complained bitterly to Vara, who was preoccupied with Gavin, that the Drabble had stolen from him the iron barrel of the pistol which Cleg Kelly had given him. Had it not been for that felony, they would not now have found themselves defenceless in that wild place.

'Boy Hugh thinks there's sure to be lions an' teegers here!' he said.

It was not long before Vara decided that they must spend another night out of doors, and looked about for a suitable spot where they could get water and shelter.

At last she settled upon the lee of a large boulder, and began to give Gavin what remained of his milk. Boy Hugh thought this was his opportunity to make sure that they were well defended against their enemies. The moon was rising, and he remembered that Cleg Kelly had told him how lions and tigers always hunted by moonlight. That widely-read journal, 'The Bully Boys of New York,' was Cleg's authority for this statement.

There was certainly an appalling silence on the face of the moorland. Boy Hugh could see, indeed, the rock behind which Vara and Gavin were. But he tried to forget it. He wanted the sensation of perfect loneliness. Then the devil entered into Boy Hugh, and he wanted to explore. The moon came out from behind a cloud, and everything became bleached and flat, melting away into vague immensities and nerve-shaking mysteries which vanished as you approached. Of course that was not the way Boy Hugh put it to himself. It only made him want to run away. But suddenly a vague fear struck him to the heart, and he started to run back (as he thought) towards Vara and Gavin. He imagined that he could hear the sound of some animal trampling about the moss in search of wandering little boys. And it occurred to him that he had no means of defence except the whip, and even that served him not so well now, for the lash was broken. So this was the reason why Boy Hugh ran away.

Though, indeed, his progress could hardly be called running. For at every few steps he tripped in some intricate twist of heather, tough as wire, and, falling forward, he instinctively bent his body into a half-hoop, like a young hedgehog. Thus he rolled down the brae, often coming upon his feet at the bottom and continuing his flight with energy unabated and without pausing a single moment even to ascertain damages.

And so soon as she missed him Vara stood up, with Gavin in her arms, and cried, 'Come back, Boy Hugh!' But Boy Hugh continued his wild flight, driven by the unreasoning terror of the vast and uncomprehended which had seized him suddenly and without warning.

At last Boy Hugh paused, not so much because he wished it as because he had fallen into a moss-hole up to the neck, and so could run no further. He sustained himself by grasping a bush of blaeberry plants, and he dug his toes into the soft black peat.

Then Boy Hugh, who had not gone to Hunker Court for nothing, bethought him that, since there was nothing else that he could do, it was time to say his prayers. 'O Lord!' he prayed—'O Lord, forgive us our sins, and remember not our trans-some-things against us! Look down from heaven and help'—(so far his supplications had run in the accustomed groove in which Samson Lanpenny conducted the 'opening exercises' of Hunker Court, but at this point Boy Hugh diverged into originality, as Samson did sometimes when he stuck in the middle of the Lord's prayer)

—‘Look down from heaven and help—a—wee laddie in a moss hole. Keep him frae teegers and lions, and bogles and black horses that come oot o’ lochs and eat ye up, and frae the green monkeys that hing on to trees and claw ye as ye gang by. And gie me something to eat, and Vara and Gavin after me. For I’m near dead o’ hunger, and I want nae mair yesterday’s bread, and help me to find my whup-lash. And make me grow up into a man fast, for I want to do as I like—and then, my certes, but I’ll warm the Drabble for stealin’ my pistol. And bless Vara and Gavin, my faither and Cleg Kelly, and a’ inquirin’ freends. Amen.’

And if anybody knows a more comprehensive prayer, let him instantly declare it, or, as the charge runs, be for ever silent.

ADVENTURE XXXVII.

BOY HUGH FINDS OUT THE NATURE OF A KISS.

VARA always looks back upon that night of fear and loneliness as the worst in all their wanderings. She wrapped Gavin tightly in the shawl, till only a little space was left for him to breathe. Then she ran from knowe-top to knowe-top to look for Boy Hugh, and to call him to come back to her. She dared not go far from the boulder lest she should miss her way, and so not be able to find her way to the baby.

While Vara was wandering distracted over the moor, calling pitifully to him, Boy Hugh was comfortably asleep beneath a heather bush. And the June nights are brief and merciful in Scotland. It was not long before a broad bar of light lay across the eastern hills. The pale sea-green lingering in the west where the sun had gone down had not altogether faded into the ashy grey of uncoloured night ere the eastern sky began to flame.

The clouds of sunrise are like ocean-rollers on a wide beach—long, barred, and parallel—for the sun rises through them with majestic circumspection. But the clouds of sunset are apt to converge to a point, like the wake which the sun draws after him in his tumultuous downward plunge.

But the sun rose quite sharply this morning, as though he must be businesslike and alert, in spite of the fact that he had a whole long day before him. As he did so the shadows of every bush of bog-myrtle and each tuft of heather started westwards

with a rush. And the cool blue image of a lonely boulder, like a Breton menhir, lay for half a mile across the moor. On the sunny side of this landmark the red rays fell on a bare and curly head. There was dew upon the dragged hair, just as there was upon the yellow bent grass upon which it pillowed itself.

Boy Hugh lay curled up, like a collie drowsing in the sun. He continued to sleep quietly and naturally the undisturbed sleep of childhood. Nor did he waken till the dew had dried from the bent and from off the tangles of his hair.

At last he awoke, when the sun was already high. He uncoiled him like a lithe young animal, and started to find himself under the open heaven instead of under a roof. With a shake and a toss of his head he made his toilet. Then suddenly he remembered about Vara, and hoped vaguely that he would soon find her. But, alas! the day was bright. The sunshine began to run in his veins, and all the moorland world was before him. He did not think much more about her at all. For the moment he was as merry as the larks singing above him. He hallooed to the plovers, and occasionally he threw stones at them, just as the mood took him. By-and-by Boy Hugh came to a wide burn, and at once proceeded to cross it, as many a time he had crossed a plank in Callendar's yard, upon all-fours like a monkey.

The burn was fringed, like many of the watercourses of the southern uplands, with a growth of sparse and ill-favoured birches. Hugh Boy found one of these which leaned far over the water, having had its roots undermined by the winter spates. He crawled out upon its swaying top without hesitation till it became too slender to bear him. He counted upon the slender trunk bending like a fishing-rod and depositing him near enough to the opposite bank to drop safely to the ground. But just when Hugh Boy was ready to leap, the treacherous birch gave way entirely, and fell souse into the water, with the small human squirrel still clinging to it. The birch lay across the pool, and Boy Hugh held fast. He was up to the neck in water. He wondered how he would get out. First he managed to kick his legs free of the twigs which clutched him and tried to drag him down.

'Here, nice little boy!' suddenly a voice above him cried. 'Take hold of my hand, and I will pull you out of the water.'

It was the clearest little voice in the world, and it spoke with a trill which Boy Hugh seemed to have heard somewhere before. It conveyed somehow, indeed, a reminiscence of Miss Celie Tennant.

But the little lady who spoke was only a year or two older than Boy Hugh himself, and she was dressed in the daintiest creamy stuff, fine like cobweb. Boy Hugh looked at her in such amazement that he came near to letting go the birch-tree altogether. She seemed to him to be all wonderful, with yellow hair like summer clouds, and blue eyes full of pity.

Boy Hugh recalled certain things which he had heard at Hunker Court.

‘Are you an angel?’ he said, quite seriously.

‘Oh no, silly!’ cried the maiden gaily, shaking her fleece bewilderingly at him. ‘Of course, I am only a little girl. I just took my parolsol and comed a walk. And you are the very nicest little boy that ever I saw—quite a child, of course,’ she added patronisingly. ‘But take hold of my parolsol. Be careful not to splash me when you shake yourself. And after that I’ll give you a kiss. I like nice little boys!’

‘What is a kiss?’ asked Boy Hugh.

They did not deal in the commodity in the Tinklers’ Lands. And even if his sister Vara did kiss him to sleep every night, and was for ever kissing the baby as if its mouth was a sweetmeat, she did not think it becoming or menseful to mention the word. So that, quite sincerely, Boy Hugh asked again, ‘What is a kiss, little girl?’

‘Come up here, nice boy, and I will show you!’ replied the maiden promptly.

And somehow Hugh knew that this was an invitation by no means to be declined.

To be continued.)

A CONVENT PRISON.

IN Austria a woman, no matter what she may do, is never regarded or treated quite as a criminal. She may rob, burn, kill—set every law at defiance, in fact, and break all the commandments in turn—without a fear of ever being called upon to face a gallows. She is not even sent to an ordinary prison to do penance for her sins; the hardest fate that can befall her, indeed, is to be compelled to take up her abode for a time in a convent. There the treatment meted out to her is not so much justice seasoned with mercy, as mercy seasoned, and none too well, with justice. Even in official reports she is an ‘erring sister’—one who has, it is true, strayed from the narrow path, but quite involuntarily.

The convent to which Vienna sends its erring sisters is at Neudorf, only a few miles away from the city. There any woman who is convicted of either crime or misdemeanour is at once transported. The judge before whom she is tried decides, of course, how long she shall remain. He may, too, if he deems it right, give orders that while there she shall pass a day in solitary confinement from time to time, and, on these occasions, be less plentifully supplied with food than usual. In the great majority of cases, however, no instructions of this kind are given; the women are simply handed over to the keeping of the Superior of the convent, to be dealt with as she thinks best. She houses them, feeds them, clothes them, and provides them with instruction and occupation; and the Government gives her for what she does thirty-five kreuzers a day (about sevenpence) for each prisoner under her care. So long as these women are in the convent the full responsibility for their safe keeping and general well-being rests on the Superior; and, in return, she is allowed practically a free hand in her management of them. There are, it is true, certain regulations in force with regard to the amount of work they may be required to do, and the punishments that may be inflicted on them; but these are not of a nature to interfere seriously with her freedom of action. She is, in fact, virtually an autocrat within her own domain; and there are not half a dozen women in Europe to-day who have so much power for the weal or woe of their fellows as she has. The only man attached to the place—a Government

inspector—is little more than her *aide-de-camp*; and as for the great officials who pay her flying visits from time to time, they are more inclined to seek advice than to give it.

The convent itself is a fine old building which once upon a time was a castle, and seems to have been strongly fortified. The religious community to which it now belongs received it as a present from its owner, who cared more for the Church than for his heir. There is nothing in the appearance of the place to show that it is a prison; the courtyard stands open the whole day long, and there is never a guard within sight. The doorkeeper is a pretty little nun whom a strong woman could easily seize up in her arms and run away with. She welcomes all comers with the brightest of smiles, and leads them into the parlour without making a single inquiry. If you ask to see the Mother Superior, however, she shakes her head decidedly; for the Superior is a personage of too much importance to waste her time on chance visitors. It was with the utmost difficulty, the other day, that the Sister could be persuaded even to take her a message. And when she returned with the news that the Superior would receive us, her manner implied clearly that there was reason for much gratitude on our part.

The Superior is a handsome old lady with keen, penetrating eyes, a firm mouth, and an expression that is at once kindly and—oddly enough, considering she is a nun—humorous. She has a gentle courtesy of manner that is singularly attractive; she has, too, that most excellent thing in woman, a low sweet voice. Judging by the stately grace with which she wears her long cream-white robes, her early days were more probably passed at the Hofburg than in a convent. The fact of her being a great lady, however, does not prevent her being a clear-headed business woman. She has at her finger-ends all the details of the working of the institution under her control; and not a spoon is moved there without her knowing the whys and wherefores of its moving. She is evidently heart and soul in her work, and keenly interested in everything that concerns her charges. She knows all the circumstances of their cases, and deals with each of them individually, bringing good influences to bear on them, appealing to their feelings, and trying to arouse in them a sense of self-respect. It is on their account, not her own, that she objects to visitors; for to turn them into a raree show, she maintains, is not only painful for them, but demoralising in the highest degree.

Although we went provided with all sorts of introductions, official and otherwise, it was only after much heart-searching that she allowed us to pass through the great iron door which separates the part of the convent where the prisoners live from the rest of the building.

Even here there is nothing gloomy or prison-like about the place; and, beyond the fact of the door being kept locked, nothing to indicate that they who live there are subject to any special restraint. The beautiful old stone staircase was flooded with sunshine that morning; and there was a smile on the faces of half the women we passed there. The Superior led the way into a large cheerful-looking room, in which some fifty women were sitting working. Perhaps half a dozen of them were making matchboxes or buttons; and the others were doing fine needlework, beautiful embroidery, lace and wool work, under the guidance of a Sister who looked for all the world as if she had stepped straight out of one of Fra Angelico's pictures. She passes her life going about among these women distributing to each in turn directions, encouragement, or reproof, as the case may be, always with a smile on her lips—one, though, in which there is more patient endurance than gladness. Another Sister, a woman with a strong, sphinx-like face, was sitting at the further end of the room, on a raised platform. She is there to maintain discipline and guard against those outbursts of temper which, from time to time, disturb the harmony of life in this convent. As we entered the room all the women rose and greeted us, in the most cheery fashion, with what sounded like a couplet from an old chant. They speedily took up their work again, however, at a sign from the Superior.

It would be hard to find a more prosperous-looking set of women than these convent prisoners: to see them one would never dream that they were supposed to be undergoing punishment. They are perfect models of cleanliness and order, their hair is carefully dressed, their cotton gowns are quite spotless, and so are the bright-coloured fichus they all wear. Physically, they seem to be just about up to the average; but intellectually, so far as an outsider can judge, they are considerably either above or below the great mass of their fellows. Some of the faces are almost idiotic in their stupidity; others are quite startlingly clever—keen, sharp, and sagacious. Although a few of the prisoners looked depressed or sullen, the great majority seemed not only contented

but happy, happier by far than half the working women one comes across in the outside world. There was a touch of something quite pathetic in the expression of more than one who were there: it was as if they had at length found rest and peace after much sore tossing, and were grateful. With some few exceptions, the women were evidently delighted to see us; and little wonder either, for it is not every day that they have the chance of talking to a stranger, or to each other either, for that matter, excepting during the recreation hours. There was quite a ring of pleasure in their voices as they answered our questions, mere inquiries for the most part with regard to what they were doing. They all seemed to take great pride in their work: one woman stroked an exquisite piece of lace she was making as if she positively loved it.

These women were all so kindly in their ways, so peaceful and good-humoured, they differed so completely from our preconceived ideas of criminals, that we were puzzled to imagine what could have brought them into prison. We had never a doubt but that their offences were of the most trivial nature, and we said so. The Superior gave us one of her odd, humorous smiles.

‘Did you notice that woman in the corridor?’ she asked. ‘She is Marie Schneider.’

That insignificant-looking little woman, who had stood aside with a gentle deprecativ smile to allow us to pass, Marie Schneider! Why, in any other place one would have set her down at once as the hard-working wife of a struggling curate, so thoroughly respectable did she look. And she is Marie Schneider, a European celebrity with more murders on her conscience than she has fingers on her hands!

‘And you let her stay here?’

‘We have nowhere else to put her,’ the Inspector, who had joined us, replied; ‘and we don’t hang women in Austria.’

Nor is she, as we soon found, the only notoriety in the place. One of the prisoners is a delicate-looking girl with large brown eyes and golden hair—a type of beauty almost peculiar to Austrians. She has a low, cooing voice, and a singularly sweet, innocent expression.

‘What on earth can that girl have done to be sent here?’ I whispered.

‘Done,’ the Inspector replied grimly; ‘set a house on fire in the hope of killing a man with his wife and five children.’

The girl must have had extraordinarily sharp ears; for,

although we were standing at some distance away, she heard what he said, and she gave him a glance such as I hope never to see again in my life. It was absolutely diabolic: had there been a knife within reach the man would have died on the spot. Yet only a moment before she had been looking up into my face with a smile an angel might have envied.

Several of the prisoners are in the convent for killing their own children; some for killing, or trying to kill, their husbands; others for stealing or embezzling; others, again, for no more serious crime than begging. There are all degrees of guilt there, in fact, and all ages, from girls of sixteen to women of nearly eighty. And they all live together on terms of perfect equality; for there are no distinctions of rank there—no one is better or worse than her neighbour. When the convent door closes behind them they have done, for the time being, not only with the outside world, but with their own past. They start life afresh, as it were.

We went from room to room, into the great dormitories with their long rows of snowy white beds; into the kitchen, with its gleaming saucepans and quaint old crockery. Here we both saw and tasted the dinner which was being served for the prisoners. And a very good dinner it was—so good, indeed, as to shock our sense of justice. These criminals had three courses for their meal: soup, beef with cabbage, and pudding, all well cooked and nicely seasoned; and there were, as we well knew, hundreds of hard-working men and women in Vienna that day who must dine on bread and cabbage, and none too much of that. The prisoners are allowed, too, to add to the meals provided for them by buying for themselves little luxuries—cups of coffee, diminutive glasses of wine, &c. They must, of course, earn the money to pay for these things before they can have them; but that is easily done, providing they be deft and diligent. They are obliged to do a certain amount of work every day, and the money for which this is sold is the property of the Superior, or rather of the community to which she belongs. For anything, however, that they choose to do over and above their allotted task they receive payment according to a fixed scale. Half the money they earn is given to them at the end of each week; and the other half accumulates until they have completed their sentence. As some of the women can make as much as five or six gulden a week, they have often quite a tidy little sum in hand wherewith to start on a new career when the time comes for them to leave the convent.

The Superior mentioned a curious fact in connection with the prison commissariat. In her time she has had persons of all ranks under her care: she has had countesses, baronesses, the wives of rich bourgeois, delicate ladies who have passed their lives in the midst of the greatest luxury; she has had, too, the very poorest of the poor, tramps and vagabonds, those who from their earliest days have had to carry on a hand-to-hand fight against starvation. From the former class she has never had a single complaint with regard to the food she provides; they have eaten whatever was set before them, and seemed thankful. From the latter class, however, she has had grumbling without end; yet all fare alike in the convent. It is always they who have been accustomed to the scantiest and coarsest rations, she maintains, who cavil most when in prison at the quality of their food.

The wing of the building that is set aside as a hospital is quite charming. It is in the sunniest part of the house, and every room is a perfect picture of cheerfulness and comfort. There are brightly coloured pictures on the walls, and vases of beautiful flowers on the tables. Everything that smacks of gloom has been carefully banished; and even the Sisters who act as nurses seem to have been specially chosen for their task on account of their gift of looking only on the bright side of life. The way they beam down on their patients is enough in itself to cure the sorriest of dyspeptics. They have all sorts of cunning devices for raising pillows and straightening beds without disturbing those who lie on them; devices, too, and very ingenious ones, for driving away pain and soothing to sleep restless sufferers. If the patients under their care were archduchesses, instead of criminals, they could not be more skilfully handled or carefully waited upon. And the prisoners are evidently conscious of their good luck: their faces quite lighted up with affection and gratitude that day, when they caught sight of the Superior. One woman, however, answered a chance remark with a passionate burst of tears. She was going to die, she said, between her sobs; she knew she was, and she wished to live. The Superior and the Sisters lavished tenderness on her, and strove to comfort her, but it was all in vain. When we were right down the corridor we could still hear her piteous cry, 'Ich will nicht sterben.' Yet one might have thought that she would have been rather glad than otherwise that the end should be so near; for her only chance of passing out of that prison door was in a coffin.

From the hospital we went to the chapel, and a very beautiful chapel it is, graceful in form and gorgeous in colouring. There are fine pictures on the walls, and exquisite flowers on the altar; the Empress Elizabeth herself, indeed, has not a more perfect shrine at which to worship than these guilt-laden prisoners. There is a beautiful organ, too, and everything that can be done is done to render the services attractive and impressive. The result is that the women, many of whom are abnormally emotional, delight in going to church. The beauty of the surroundings there seems to touch certain subtle chords in their nature, arousing memories in some, in others exciting hopes. They throw themselves heart and soul into the singing, and listen to the exhortations with rapt attention. Many of them—and they the wildest and most desperate as a rule—fall under the influence of religious enthusiasm, a fact which contributes not a little to the maintenance of discipline in the prison.

In the chapel, strange to say, is to be found the one outward and visible sign there is in the convent that they who go there belong to the dangerous class. The chancel is separated from the nave—the only part of the building to which the prisoners are admitted—by a strong iron grating. The Superior seemed to think that this was a very necessary precaution, as otherwise a woman, in one of those paroxysms of rage to which some of them are subject, might attack the officiating clergy. She looked infinitely amused, however, when, remembering the golden-haired girl, I suggested that she and the Sisters stood more in need of protection than the priests. There are only thirty-three of them in the convent—the Inspector lives outside—and there are always more than a hundred prisoners, who all go about the house without let or hindrance. Those Sisters in the workroom are shut up with their charges, quite beyond the reach of aid, for the hour together. What could they do, two against fifty, if they were attacked? The Superior admitted that, if the prisoners revolted *en masse*, it would go ill with her and her companions; but such a thing never had occurred, and she is perfectly convinced that it never will. It is only the new arrivals who give trouble, she says, and they soon fall under the influences that are brought to bear on them.

The way the Sisters manage their charges is quite wonderful, the Inspector told me later. 'Yes, they look quiet and good-humoured enough now,' he said, 'but you should see them when

they arrive. Some of them are more like wild animals than human beings. I would rather have ten men to deal with any day than one woman, and I have had a wide experience. Women, when they go wrong, are so violent and unreasonable—so tricky, too; one never knows what they will be up to next.'

Among these nuns the management of prisoners is become quite a science. They always keep a woman under strict surveillance during the first few days of her stay in the convent, and make a special study of her character, with a view to finding out how she can be most easily influenced. Some of the prisoners are treated with a certain amount of severity—are confined in cells and fed on bread and water when they set rules at defiance; but even in their case the discipline enforced is not harsher than that to which many a delicate lady, in a Carmelite convent, submits voluntarily. With others the Sisters reason; with others, again, and they the great majority, they try persuasion. They lavish sympathy, however, on them all—on the worst as on the best, and herein lies, perhaps, the secret of their success. These women, even the most violent of them, are often at heart sorely battered and cast down when they are handed over to the nuns; and a kindly greeting, a few friendly words, at such a moment have a wonderfully humanising effect.

A few years ago one of the prisoners held the Sisters completely at bay for some days. She was obdurate alike to threats and persuasions, punishments and rewards. She would neither work nor eat, but passed her time just tearing her hair and hurling curses around. So violent was she that no one could approach her without danger. At length, when the Sisters were quite at their wits' end, one of them asked her if she had no relative or friend of whom she cared to have news. The woman gasped for breath for a moment, with a look of wild astonishment in her eyes, as if she could hardly believe her ears. She sprang to her feet, however, in a perfect ecstasy of delight and gratitude, when the Sister followed up her inquiry by volunteering to write for her and obtain any information she wished. From that moment there was not a more tractable or better behaved woman in the convent. She had, it seems, left five little children behind her when sent to prison; and was just eating out her heart with the fear (a groundless one, as it proved) lest they were starving.

There is much in this convent prison, it must be confessed, that jars upon our English sense of what is right and seemly: we

had a sort of feeling while there that many of these women were not being severely enough dealt with ; that they were not rendering tooth for tooth, eye for eye, in the proper orthodox fashion. Much righteous indignation was engendered by the spectacle of criminals—murderesses, even, and incendiaries—being so well fed and treated so kindly. Then the general clubbing together of all ages and all degrees of guilt, that is the order of the day there, is contrary to all our ideas of justice. The place is organised on a radically wrong system, in fact ; and should any of our prison reformers ever pay it a visit, they will without doubt thenceforth hold it up as a perfect model of what such an institution should not be. Still—these things are beyond all comprehension—it cannot be denied that they who are sent to Neudorf are, as a rule, better women—more moral, more human, and more industrious—when they leave than when they enter. Of our own prisons it has been said, with scant justice, perhaps, that if by chance an honest man goes in, he is a rogue when he comes out.

AN AFFECTIONATE SON.

THE name on the card was Maddox, but at the first sound of his voice I recognised the man shown into the office as Sydney Carstairs. He didn't notice me; he was too eager to get audience of Mr. Maciver, who managed the firm's advertising. We do a good deal in that way, and I've no doubt that Maddox's card had been sent up a good many times before our Mr. Maciver would grant an interview. So I leaned back and listened while my old school-fellow let loose the flood of his eloquence.

'The "*Lamp of Truth*,"' he said, 'is a publication which is of almost unique value to such a firm as yours. We have only just begun, but we have a great future before us. We spare no expense to make our paper attractive to readers in all parts of the country. We have a weekly sermon by the Rev. T. Baggs Calshott, the famous preacher of the Balls Pond Tabernacle; Lucy Markham, the well-known novelist, writes a serial story for us, and we have each week a poetical contribution from Catherine Herbert, the talented authoress of the "*Rainbow of Hope*." With these attractions we shall go in hundreds of thousands of Christian households throughout the land, and shall form a simply unrivalled medium for such high-class advertisers as yourselves.'

Our Mr. Maciver turned an amused face towards me. I knew very well that Mr. Maddox had been admitted in order that I might have an object-lesson. I was new to the business, and had to be taught all branches of it. So he stopped the full tide of Mr. Maddox's eloquence by the remorseless question:

'What present circulation do you guarantee?'

While poor Sydney was delivering himself of an entirely evasive reply I had time to observe him closely. He was the last man I should ever have expected to see figuring as an advertising canvasser, and I knew already enough of these people to see that my old friend belonged distinctly to the lower varieties of that interesting genus. His hat alone was enough to show the hardest pinch of poverty. He had been such a dandy at Oxford!

Mr. Maciver had tossed '*The Lamp of Truth*' contemptuously aside, but Carstairs tried a second chance.

'"*The Footlights*,"' he said, speaking as fast as he could, for fear he might not be allowed to finish, 'has a splendid circulation,

not only with the profession, but also among the large and increasing class who are deeply interested in the drama. Actors are especially fond of savoury additions to their dishes. There are some, I believe, who almost live upon pickles, and as a medium for your unrivalled products——'

But our Mr. Maciver had amused himself enough, and signified pretty plainly that there was no business to be done and that Sydney might retire. The poor man's briskness vanished. He seemed, as it were, to resume a look of settled disappointment as he slowly turned to the door.

'Dormy,' I called out, 'dear me, Dormy——"Aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus."'

Sydney Carstairs had once made this particular false quantity, and so earned himself more than one nickname.

He looked round at the sound of the old appellation, and saw me. He turned very red and let fall the papers he was carrying.

'Mr. Maciver,' I said, 'this is an old friend of mine; we must do something for him. Something good. A whole page and a series, you know.'

Mr. Maciver looked rather disgusted at this unbusinesslike procedure, but commenced an examination of the two journals.

Sydney, meanwhile, seemed very awkward and ill at ease, and assured me several times that he had not expected to see me; that he did not know that I took an active interest in the business, and so on.

He approved faintly of the choice Mr. Maciver had made, which preferred the 'Footlights' to 'The Lamp of Truth.'

'Neither is a really good medium,' Sydney said, with sudden frankness, 'but you are doing it to oblige me, and "The Lamp of Truth" expects the heaviest lying;' and he departed, looking several degrees less unhappy, but not before I had arranged to meet him again.

A day or two later Sydney dined with me, and we talked for a long time over old days and old friends. It was at my place in the country, and we sat out of doors after dinner and smoked. As the twilight deepened Sydney became more confidential and a little more cheerful.

'I daresay,' he said, 'you were surprised enough to see me trotting round to tout for advertisements. It is not a grand position for a banker's son. But I daresay you know the bank failed and my father died suddenly, and there was nothing left for me.'

I had been called to the Bar, but had never seen a brief, and did not even expect to see one. I tried journalism—tried very hard, very hard indeed—but I suppose I wasn't clever enough; at any rate, I could not make it pay, and so I drifted into what I'm doing now. Sometimes I don't do so badly.' Sydney was silent, and I quite understood that those times did not come very often.

'I'm awfully obliged to you,' he burst out again, 'for helping me. An order from a firm like yours is worth something. I've shown it all round, and I've got Condensed Cocoa on the strength of it, and I've half a promise from Black's, the soap people. Why, when I went back to "Footlights" office with your order in my hand, they nearly fell on my neck for joy.'

To change the subject I turned back to the old days, and reminded Carstairs of a school holiday I had spent at his father's house.

'I had a very jolly time of it,' I said. 'I used to ride races across your father's park with your sister Mabel, and once her horse ran away, and your mother was terribly frightened.'

Carstairs sighed. 'Poor Mab is dead, and the park was sold for building sites.' Then he added as an after-thought, 'But wouldn't you like to go down and see my mother some time? She is living at Kew. When the crash came and all our furniture was sold, we saved enough to furnish a tiny cottage. There was a little money settled on her, and she manages on that. There's a young lady who lives with her. The dining-room will just seat four, and my mother has often asked me to bring a friend, and, as a rule, I haven't anyone. The friends I have now are not exactly *salonfähig*, as they say in Germany. My mother would be sure to recognise you.'

Sydney's prediction was completely fulfilled when I went down with him a week later to the tiny cottage he had spoken of. Mrs. Carstairs recognised me at once, and reminded me of several things which had happened during my stay at her house. But I certainly should not have known her again, though I had a clear mental image of the lady I had known before. But time had not dealt gently with Mrs. Carstairs; the comely, cheerful matron of my remembrance had become an old lady with furrowed cheeks, bent shoulders, and white hair. The only other guest was a young lady whom Mrs. Carstairs called Lucy, and Sydney, Miss Hilton. She was quite a pretty young lady, not in her first youth, and I divined at once that Mrs. Carstairs had formed plans in which her son and

Miss Hilton were greatly interested. Sydney looked very different from the shabby being who had been so exceedingly deferential to our clerk. His dress-clothes were faultless, and he had an orchid in his buttonhole. He expressed himself with considerable decision on many points, and I noticed that the younger as well as the elder lady listened to what he said with a great deal of attention. Mrs. Carstairs contrived that a good deal of her son's conversation was directed to Miss Hilton, and after dinner she manœuvred them both into the little patch of garden, while she sat in the verandah and talked to me. I suppose Carstairs had foreseen this, and had guessed what would be the subject of his mother's conversation, for on the way down he had given me a caution.

'My mother,' he had said, with some confusion, 'isn't aware at all of what I am doing for a living. I've told her that I am connected with the Press, and she hasn't any idea of the precise nature of the connection. Please don't enlighten her.'

So I was not altogether surprised when Mrs. Carstairs asked me if I had ever had any connection with journalism. The negative reply that was expected served as a starting-point for the proud mother.

'Sydney writes a great deal, I believe,' she said; 'in fact, it's his only real occupation. His practice at the Bar amounts to nothing. He has never told you, I suppose, the papers that he's connected with?'

'I have never heard him allude to himself as contributor to any particular organ,' I replied; 'but then, you know, I have hardly seen him for a great many years.'

'It would be all the same, I expect, if you had seen him every day,' the old lady returned very quickly. 'Sydney is very reticent about Press matters, though he's frankness itself in other things. And I suppose he is quite right to be discreet. He always says that the anonymity of writers for the daily or weekly Press ought to be most carefully maintained. We can never get him to admit the authorship of a single article. For a long time we didn't even know what paper he was permanently connected with.'

'But you know now?' I queried.

'Yes; we found it out by accident—Miss Hilton and myself. We had been talking politics one evening, and the next day we found everything we had said in a leader—much better expressed, of course—and when we taxed him with having written the article, he couldn't deny it. And do you know what paper it was?'

I shook my head.

'The "Times,"' said the old lady impressively. 'And now we've got so far that we can tell which articles are his. Sometimes there isn't anything by him, and then, you know, I think the paper is very dull,' she added, with a little laugh.

'How do you tell your son's writing?' I asked.

'Oh,' she replied, 'there are a lot of little signs that we know. There are certain words he is very fond of using, and, and—I can't explain it, but there are lots of little things. Lucy and I always read the paper, and we each of us settle in our mind which is his, and in almost every case when we come to compare notes we find we agree perfectly. So you see,' she concluded, with a lively nod. She was silent for a few moments, watching the two who were pacing about in the little garden, but she soon returned to the subject.

'It's a great responsibility,' she said, 'to write for a journal like the "Times," and I am sure my son feels it. Sometimes he seems quite absent-minded, and—and almost as if he had too much to think of. And sometimes he doesn't come down to see us for weeks and weeks. He is too busy, he says.'

Mrs. Carstairs then began to question me about myself, but the fact that I had been married only a few months before rolled the conversation back to the favourite topic.

'I wish Sydney would marry,' she said; 'but he always tells me that he hasn't time, and he doesn't like being pressed on the subject.'

The return of the pair from outside made the conversation general, and before very long Carstairs declared that he was obliged to leave. We drove back together in a hansom. Carstairs was silent and depressed. He seemed to be relapsing into the weary mood of the underpaid drudge.

'Did my mother say much about me?' he queried timidly.

I told him the substance of the conversation. 'She thinks that you write for the "Times,"' I said.

He shook his head sadly. 'And I let her think so—in fact, I've encouraged the idea. Poor soul! if she saw me going about my work day after day, waiting for hours in offices, hanging round doors, in the hope of getting a word in with the big man as he comes out, and not only with firms like yours, but with small people—dirty, greasy, illiterate tradespeople, who, all the same, look down on me and snub me at times, and are offensively familiar

at others—if she saw this going on when she thinks I am meditating on deep affairs of state, I am afraid it would almost break her heart. I lead a dog's life, and my worst fear is that my mother may come to know of it. You may think it is very wrong of me to let her deceive herself so, but I can't help it.'

'Wouldn't it be better to let her know how things are?' I asked.

'I can't tell her the truth; I can't tell her that I'm deep down in the mud and that I shall always stick there. It's not my fault,' he went on, in passionate tones, 'that I am where I am! I tried my best. I worked early and late, and covered reams of paper, but 'twas all of no use. I was determined to do something for my poor mother—to give her some of the luxuries which she was always used to. I meant to do a great deal, and I've done just nothing—absolutely nothing. I am too miserably poor to help her in any way. The only pleasure I can give her is to let her think that I am prosperous and happy. And even that is hard. I can't manage at times to keep a decent coat to wear when I go down to see her.'

He buried his face in his hands and groaned audibly. I tried to cheer him up by the hope of brighter days, but he refused to be comforted. With an attempt at jocularly, I said:

'You'll be lucky in time, perhaps. A rich wife is being saved up for you somewhere.'

He looked up suddenly. 'Did my mother say anything about that?'

'She'd like you to be married,' I said.

He sighed profoundly. 'She wants me to marry Miss Hilton,' he replied, 'who will have some money by-and-by—not that she imagines I need it.'

'Well,' I said, 'why don't you? She struck me as a very charming young lady, and evidently fond of you.'

He was silent a few moments, and then said, in a low voice:

'The fact is I am married already, and I have two small children to provide for. That's another secret I have to keep. My wife is not a lady—she doesn't even pretend to be.'

My curiosity was excited, and I couldn't help showing it.

'She was a waitress,' he said, 'at a cheap restaurant in the City. Steak and kidney pudding for 7d.—that sort of thing. She was very pretty and quiet, and I was solitary. I had given up any hopes of succeeding at anything, and I fell in love with

the waitress, I couldn't help it. It is not good for man to be alone, I suppose. At any rate, we are married; there are two children to look after, and there'll be another before long. My mother-in-law lives with us,' he went on with an air of stolid resignation, 'and looks after things. She is a good manageress, but her temper gets the better of her sometimes, and when I am unlucky and can't bring any money in, she—well, she doesn't do much to console me.'

Before we parted I asked him if I could help him financially a little.

'You know,' I said, 'there's a profit on pickles, and we don't sell our jams at cost price. I can always spare a little money. Won't you let me help you now and then?'

He thanked me heartily, but declined the offer.

'I'll bear it in mind as a last resource,' he said; 'but I don't want to begin borrowing little sums. I should never be able to pay them back, and it might become a habit. Leave me what poor shreds of self-respect I have got left.'

I had thought of doing something more than occasionally advancing small sums, but I saw he had misunderstood me, and I did not press my offer further. I determined to bear the matter in mind, and to see if I could find any better opening for my old schoolfellow. But nothing occurred for some time; I had plenty to think of, and the idea of helping Carstairs receded more and more into the background. But I got my wife to call at the cottage at Kew. She liked Mrs. Carstairs very much, and took her and Miss Hilton sometimes for a drive through Richmond Park. They were invited, too, to some of the milder functions at our house. Mrs. Carstairs' conversation was always full of her son's supposed contribution to the 'Times.' She showed us some of these, and claimed our admiration. One afternoon, after five-o'clock tea, she consulted me, in a carefully contrived *tête-à-tête*, as to the probable remuneration.

'Sydney does three or four leaders a week for the "Times." What do you think they would pay him?' She looked at me inquiringly.

I disclaimed all knowledge, but thought 1,000*l.* a year would be something like it.

'That's what I should have said,' the old lady rejoined, evidently pleased at my views concurring with her own. 'And then, of course, Sydney writes for other papers. I've been think-

ing of this, because he has been very economical lately in one or two little things. Cabs, for example. He never comes in a cab, and even when it rains he won't let us send out to fetch one. He says he prefers the railways. And once, when I knew the train he was coming by and met him at the station, I actually saw him get out of a third-class carriage—fancy that for Sydney!—a carriage full of the most dreadful-looking people. Now you know he wouldn't have done that without some reason. Can you guess what that was?' and she looked me right in the face with a smile on her lips.

I could guess easily enough, but it was not my duty to shatter the dear old lady's illusions. So I murmured vaguely something about the democratic tendencies of the age—many people of the best position always travelled third class; one or two peers, I had been told, always did so, &c.

'Or perhaps,' I suggested, as an afterthought, 'he was studying the manners and customs of the working classes, preparatory to writing some article?'

I felt rather ashamed of the plausibility of this suggestion. Mrs. Carstairs shook her head in vigorous dissent.

'No,' she said; 'Sydney doesn't condescend to that style of journalism. Politics—*la haute politique*—and literature form his department. And the democratic tendencies of the age are not the reason either. Sydney isn't democratic any more than I am. Quite the reverse. There's one bit of Latin that I know, because I've heard him quote it so often when he was a young man—*Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo*. I know that's in Horace, and I know what it means. No, I'm sure that it is for a special motive that he has become so penurious lately. He wants to save money for some very particular purpose, and I know what that purpose is.'

I was evidently expected to be curious, and I satisfied expectation.

'I can speak to you,' the old lady went on—'speak to you as an old friend. You know, when the creditors came down on us and things were sold, there were dividends paid. I don't know exactly how many, or what they amounted to, but I am afraid they didn't come to twenty shillings in the pound. And that's what Sydney's saving for—to pay everybody everything. I am sure of it. When the crash came I remember his telling me that that was what he was going to do. He's never said anything about it since, and I had quite forgotten all about it, and I was puzzled by

his penuriousness, till all of a sudden I remembered what he had said, and then everything was clear. I knew that he was patiently accumulating till he had got quite enough to pay off everything with interest—I'm sure he'd want to pay interest as well—and then he'd come forward, and call the creditors and pay off everything, and then come to me and say: "Mother, I've cleared our good name from all reproach. Now I am a free man, and I can marry the girl of my choice"—and she looked across to Miss Hilton, who was chatting with my wife at a little distance. 'And I think you will find,' she went on, dropping her voice to a whisper, 'that it won't be very long before all this takes place. I have reasons for thinking so.'

I was weak enough to say something indefinite about this paying off of old debts being very rare. 'And it's very noble conduct,' I said, 'but——'

'You think it a little quixotic,' the old lady replied, quickly; 'perhaps I do, too. But there would be no use trying to persuade Sydney—he couldn't be got to take the business view of the subject.'

Our *tête-à-tête* was interrupted, and the theme of conversation changed. But before we left the old lady pressed me very earnestly to dine at Kew on a certain date she named.

'It's my birthday, you know,' she said, 'and Sydney is sure to be there. We haven't seen him for a long time—we can hardly expect to see much of him now that a general election is going on, but I'm sure he'll be there then. He has never missed my birthday yet.'

'I promised to be of the party, and the evident pleasure which my acceptance gave was painfully significant. I could see that the old lady was quite sure in her own mind that that evening was the time fixed for the scene which was to mark the triumphant issue of her son's strange lapse into penuriousness.

Only the day before the evening of the dinner Carstairs called at our offices, and contrived, not without difficulty, to get admitted to my sanctum. He looked even shabbier than he had done when I saw him first. Things were going very badly with him, he said. 'The Footlights' had been sold to a man who did his own canvassing, and 'The Lamp of Truth' had gone out entirely.

'Condensed Cocoa gave them a short order,' Carstairs said, 'and when that came to an end the paper died. But I haven't come to talk about that,' he added, after a short pause, 'but to ask

you to lend me a few pounds. I know I refused when you offered before, but perhaps you won't mind that.'

'Of course not,' I said. 'Dear me, Dormy, don't make a fuss about a trifle.'

'It's for to-morrow's dinner,' he said. 'I've always kept up my mother's birthday. I always managed it all right, but this year I can't. My dress-suit isn't—isn't available, and I want to take a few flowers and some little trifle.'

He named a small sum, and I handed over the money.

'I don't know when I'll pay you back,' he said; 'perhaps never, for things are getting worse and worse with me.'

I met him the next day at the station at Kew. He was irreproachably attired, and carried a big bouquet of choice flowers. His looks were gloomy.

'I don't know,' he said, 'if this was all to be done over again whether I would do it. But I've kept up appearances so long that I must go on doing so to the end. It would be cruel to undeceive my poor mother now.'

He shook off all outward signs of depression before he reached the house, and responded warmly to his mother's effusive welcome. He talked a good deal during dinner, and interested the ladies with gossip of the great world, gained as I guessed by a careful preliminary perusal of the society journals. Mention was made of the approaching marriage of an ex-Cabinet Minister, and the ladies were curious about the bride.

'Is she so very good-looking?' Mrs. Carstairs asked. 'You've seen her scores of times, of course?'

'Not lately,' Sydney said, with a hurried glance at me. Then he added, 'But she was quite the belle of last season.'

Mrs. Carstairs looked gravely at her son. 'You mustn't let yourself drop out of society,' she said, 'not even for a general election.'

After dinner the evening was very warm, and we all sat out in the little garden. After a time music was suggested, and Miss Hilton agreed to play a sonatina.

'It's your favourite, Sydney,' his mother said, 'and you must turn over the leaves, and we'll stay out here and have a little chat.'

As soon as the other two had passed into the drawing-room Mrs. Carstairs opened fire on me with—

'Wasn't it a beautiful bouquet that Sydney brought me? It must have cost a great deal,' and she looked at me significantly.

I knew what was passing in her mind. She meant to say, 'The self-imposed task is over, the period of penury is gone, and the revelation will soon be made.'

I was so sure that this was passing in her mind that I hastened to change the subject. But she soon got back to the favourite topic.

'Don't you think poor Sydney looks a little fatigued?' and without waiting for a reply she went on:—'He has had to work so hard, you know. But what a triumph it is for him to have overthrown the Government! It is really he who has done it, you know. Everybody says it is all due to the "Times." But I hope there won't be another general election just yet.'

I acquiesced vaguely in the wish.

'You know,' she went on, 'when Sydney was a boy, and did so well at school, I used to be very ambitious for him. I used to think he would enter Parliament like his father, and that he might win a great position there—"The applause of listening senates to command," you know—all that sort of thing, and it was a great disappointment to me when that was all put aside. But now I ask you, isn't the journalist, who, by the mere force of his pen, can mould public opinion, who can remain unknown, or at least almost unknown, and can overturn one Ministry and dictate a policy to another—isn't that man much greater than a mere member of Parliament, who is expected to vote as he is told? How many of our public men are there whose influence is half as great as Sydney's?'

Mrs. Carstairs spoke vehemently, her eyes flashed, a tinge of pale pink coloured her thin, worn cheeks.

We were interrupted by a disturbance in the drawing-room. The sonatina had ceased, and there was the sound of loud, angry voices. We found two unexpected visitors. One was a stoutish woman with a red face, apparently about fifty; the other was about half that age, and with a very fair share of good looks, in spite of evident signs of weakness and indifferent health. She carried a diminutive baby. Both were shabbily dressed, though the younger woman had made some ineffectual attempts at finery. The elder woman was brandishing Sydney's bouquet and screaming wildly at Miss Hilton.

'What 'ave you got to do with another woman's 'usband, I'd like to know. Sixteen shillings and sixpence he give for them flowers. I seen him. Sixteen shillings and sixpence, and his poor children crying because they haven't had enough to eat, poor

little dears, and his lawful wife as he promised to love and cherish hardly able to stand with her baby not six weeks old, and not a penny has he brought into the home for the last month, and I may toil and moil, and he can dress himself up as if he was the lord of the land, and chuck his money away as if his pockets were stuffed with bank-notes—him that can't earn ten shillings a week, and can't find nobody to trust him with half-a-crown! Him a canvasser, indeed! Why, he had much better stop in the shop than wear out his boot-leather when he can't do nothing a'cause of his being so shabby. Why, they turn him out of any respectable place. And my daughter, as might have married a plumber's young man who has now got a shop of his own, and makes his four pound a week regular!'

This is only a sample of the lady's oratory. She said a good deal more, while the younger woman sat down and attended to the claims of the baby, who had begun to cry.

We all remained speechless while the tirade was being delivered. Miss Hilton, very pale, stood clutching the piano, and gazing alternately, now at Sydney, and now at the woman with the baby. Mrs. Carstairs stood in wide-eyed astonishment, not comprehending the scene or what she was hearing.

'Sydney,' she said at last, turning to her son, 'what does this mean? Who are these people?'

He had been standing motionless with downcast head, but at his mother's appeal he came forward, and with an air of forced calmness said:

'Mother, this lady is my mother-in-law, Mrs. Thompson, and this is my wife, and this is my youngest child. There are two others. Your ideas about me need some slight correction. I don't write for the "Times," nor for anything else. It is true that I am connected with the Press, but I am only a canvasser, and a canvasser for some of the poorest and meanest papers that ever were printed. On the whole, I am a little superior in rank to the men whom you see carrying boards in the streets. I earn very little money, and sometimes none at all. I couldn't get on without Mrs. Thompson, who has just been expressing her views so powerfully, though perhaps a trifle incoherently. She keeps a shop, where we sell bottles of lemonade and sweets and marbles and penny weekly newspapers. And sometimes we do badly, and then we don't have enough to eat, and sometimes we do better, and then we have shrimps for tea. And, mother——'

He stopped; a sort of spasm seemed to check his utterance and to run like a wave through his whole body. Then crying—

'My God! my God! I can't bear it!' he fell on the sofa and buried his head in the cushions. The poor mother tottered to his side.

'My poor Sydney!' she said, softly, 'my poor, poor boy!'

Miss Hilton was the next to speak.

'Don't you think,' she said, turning to me, 'that there are too many of us here? Perhaps Mrs. Thompson and the new Mrs. Carstairs would like to retire.'

Mrs. Thompson followed her daughter out of the drawing-room, but her tongue was not to be silenced. She felt bound to explain the order of events: she had seen the address on a letter her son-in-law had written; she had watched, and had seen him go to a coffee-house and emerge in evening dress; she had followed him to Covent Garden, and witnessed the purchase of the bouquet, and then she had gone home and shut up the shop, and had come down by train, bringing her daughter with her. She expressed her determination to take Sydney back with her, but a bank-note astonished her into silence and compliance with my views, which were that she should leave at once. An empty cab happened to be passing and received the party. But before that Miss Hilton had a short colloquy with Sydney's wife.

'So,' she said, in a harsh tone, 'you are his wife, and that's his baby! Does he ever beat you, I wonder?'

The woman looked astonished.

'Oh no, miss!' she said; 'he's a good 'usband, and he does what he can when he has the means. Only, I don't hold with him buying flowers when his children haven't got enough to eat.'

'I don't believe he's a good husband,' Miss Hilton replied. 'He's a treacherous coward. But if he beats you, you deserve it. It is you that keep him down in the gutter—you and your precious parcel of babies.'

The poor woman was frightened at the young lady's violent tone, and shrank away in a corner of the cab. But she was unwilling to leave without her husband, and Mrs. Thompson took the same view of the position. They had, however, grasped the fact that Sydney was with his mother, and they were persuaded to drive off. After the sound of the wheels had died away Miss Hilton, with a hasty good-night, rushed off to her own room.

When I got back to the drawing-room Sydney hadn't moved from the sofa. The failure of the well-meant efforts at deception which he had maintained so long was the cruellest blow fortune had dealt him, and it broke him down completely. He was sobbing like a child, and his mother, sitting by his side, was trying to comfort him, in the same way that she had soothed his infant troubles, with tender caresses and only half-articulate words. She waved me a mute farewell with her disengaged hand, and I left the house.

I never saw her again. My wife called twice at the little cottage at Kew, but the mistress was not to be seen. A third visit after some lapse of time found the house untenanted and empty, and inquiries in the neighbourhood elicited nothing.

But nearly two years later I was introduced to a Mrs. Malcolm, a newly married lady, in whom I recognised the former Miss Hilton. From her I learned that Mrs. Carstairs had been dead for some time.

'She never got over that night,' the young lady said; 'all her life clung round those illusions as to her son's career, and the revelation killed her. She tried to put a good face on the matter; she went over to see the children once or twice, and when the baby had measles the two grandmothers made a great fuss about him, and became almost friendly. But she could never really reconcile herself to the state of things: the little shop where they sold lemonade and sweets and horrible little papers, and Sydney, shabby, penniless, almost despairing—all this was too much for her. She died. Pneumonia the medical certificate called it.'

Mrs. Malcolm was silent for a few moments, and then began again:

'Do you think you will ever see Sydney again—Mr. Carstairs, I should say?'

I expressed my doubts.

'If you do,' Mrs. Malcolm said, 'give him a message from me.' She hesitated, and looked down. 'You know there were two of us who had illusions. Tell him I forgive him, and wish him well.'

Mrs. Malcolm's message had to wait nearly three years to get delivered. Then one day I had a visit from Carstairs. He came to repay me the 10*l.* he had borrowed for his mother's birthday dinner, and explained why he had not seen me before.

‘I’ve been living in the Midlands, and then I wanted to come with the money in my hand.’

I gave Mrs. Malcolm’s message, but I could see that the mischief he had done in deceiving that lady had never occupied a prominent position in his thoughts.

‘Then you know of my mother’s death?’ he said. ‘It was sudden at the last, and I suppose it was what people would call a happy release. There was nothing for her to live for when I had turned out a failure. Her mind was a little disturbed some weeks before she died, and there were times when she seemed to forget all about that terrible evening, and to think of me in the old way. Then she died, and it was I who killed her.’

He was silent for a moment and then said: ‘It’s the saddest thing in life that some men seem doomed to break the hearts of those they love best.’

To change the dolorous direction of his thoughts I asked if he was doing better in business.

‘Yes,’ he replied gravely, ‘things are not so bad as they were. I work for a good paper and get a regular salary. I secured Condensed Cocoa and two of the soap people. We are not so poor as we were; mother left us all she could leave, and it makes things easier, and Mrs. Thompson is really very good now. My eldest daughter too is a great comfort; we are all so proud of her, she is so good and does so well at school.’

Since that interview I have never seen Carstairs to speak to, or heard of him. But I caught sight of him once coming out of Charing Cross Station; he looked grey and bent—premature old age had plainly set its mark upon him. A very sweet-looking child of about eleven years of age was with him. They had evidently had a day in the country together, for his boots were dusty, and she held in one hand a bunch of wild flowers; the other hand clasped his, and as I watched them slowly crossing Trafalgar Square I was pleased to think that Destiny, which had meted out such hard measure to my old schoolfellow, had sent consolation for his latter years in the guise of that graceful child.

THE ADVANCE OF ADVERTISEMENT.

It is generally believed, by the simple and unlearned, that the art of advertising is of comparatively modern invention, but a very slight study of the subject will be sufficient to convince the inquirer that it is, in point of fact, one of the most ancient of all the civilised arts. Indeed, the first advertisement was probably coeval with the first man who had something to dispose of, or with the first woman who wanted something she had not got. It seems not impossible that the serpent tempted Eve to partake of the apple by means of a 'puff paragraph' setting forth the merits of the fruit as a complexion beautifier. Be that as it may, the uses of advertisement were known, at a very early date, to the Israelites, who were accustomed to placard the streets of their cities with the utterances of kings and prophets. The ancient Greeks, too, were much given to advertisement, chiefly through the medium of the town crier, who, however, was not permitted to offend the ears of the citizens with his proclamations unless he were accompanied by a musician to give him the correct pitch. The fact that property had been stolen or damaged was made known by means of curses, inscribed upon sheets of lead, which were affixed to the statues of infernal deities in the temple, the vengeance of the gods being thus invoked upon the persons who had stolen or injured the advertiser's goods. A rider was usually added, to the effect that should the property be returned, or recompense be paid, the owner would intercede with the gods for a remission of the punishment.

The Romans also made use of the town crier to proclaim laws, victories, or sales, and the walls of the streets were covered with notices painted in black or red, or inscribed upon terra-cotta slabs and let into the pillars on either side of houses and shops. Many of these wall advertisements were found in Herculaneum and Pompeii, among the most interesting being the announcements of the gladiatorial games, containing promises that shelter would be provided in case of rain, and that the sand would be watered should the weather be exceptionally warm.

In the dark ages, when knowledge of reading and writing was almost confined to the clergy, the pedlar was the chief newsagent

and advertising medium. The public crier was still in existence, but his office was almost a sinecure, except for occasional proclamations of war or peace. As civilisation advanced, however, he found a more extended sphere, and as early as 1141 we hear of the wine criers, who perambulated the streets carrying samples of their wares, being an organised body in France; while in England the town crier, who used a horn instead of a bell, was an important institution by the end of the thirteenth century. It was not long before street advertisements of various kinds came into general use. Signs were hung in front of shops to indicate the wares sold within, and tradesmen stationed touters at their doors who shouted 'What d'ye lack?' to the passers-by and lauded the quality of their masters' goods. The town and country houses of the nobility were used as inns in the owners' absence, and as the family arms always hung outside the door, it is easy to understand the predilection of the professional innkeepers of later days for dragons, lions, and other heraldic animals as the ornaments of their signboards.

Written handbills and placards were used for public notices of all kinds, while almost as soon as the art of printing was invented it was applied to purposes of advertisement. The first poster ever printed in England is supposed to be that by which Caxton, in 1480, announced the sale of 'Pyes of Salisbury use.' These 'pyes' were neither sweet nor savoury, being nothing more tempting than a collection of ecclesiastical rules as practised in the diocese of Salisbury. The advertisement runs: 'If it please any man spiritual or temporal to buy our pyes of two or three commemoracio's of Salisbury use, empynted after the form of this present lettre, whyche ben wel and truly correct, late him come to Westmonester, into the almonestrye at the reed pole, and he shal have them good and chepe; supplico stet cedula.'

With improvements in printing, pamphlets began to be enlarged and to appear more frequently. As early as 1524 small books of news were published in Germany at irregular intervals. The first attempt at anything in the nature of a newspaper advertisement is to be found in a German newsbook for the year 1591, which contains items of news of the three preceding years, including accounts of the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the murder of Henri III. of France. A certain strange plant having appeared near the town of Soltwedel—in token, it was believed, of Divine wrath—one Doctor Laster wrote a book about it, which

book, observes the editor of the pamphlet, 'shows and explains what this plant contains. Curran has published it, and Matthew Welach has printed it in Wittemberg. Let whoever does not know the meaning of this portent buy the book at once, and read it with all possible speed.'

In England, the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642 caused an unusual demand for news, insomuch that Samuel Butler, a bookseller, conceived the idea of printing a weekly news-letter from the Venetian gazettes, which had hitherto circulated in manuscript. Although this venture, which Ben Jonson ridiculed in his 'Staple of News,' was not a success, it was imitated by other enterprising booksellers, and the foundation of our periodical literature was laid. The earliest authentic English newspaper advertisement is believed to be the following, which appeared in the 'Mercurius Politicus' for January, 1652: 'Irenodia Gratulatoria, Heroick Poem; being a congratulatory panegyrick for my Lord General's late return, summing up his successes in an exquisite manner. To be sold by John Holden in the New Exchange, London.'

In the same paper, in 1658, appeared the first public mention of 'that Excellent and by all Physicians approved China drink, called by the Chineans tcha, by other nations Tay *alias* Tee.' The price of the variously spelt drink is not stated, but some years earlier tea was sold at from 6*l.* to 10*l.* per pound. Coffee-houses were opened in London in 1652, when flaming advertisements appeared, setting forth the innumerable virtues of 'cophee,' which seems to have been regarded as a panacea for every earthly ill.

The 'Public Advertiser' made its appearance in 1657, and its contents, as the name implies, consisted chiefly of advertisements. Other papers were quick to adopt the same easy and lucrative method of filling a part of their columns, but as yet announcements of fairs, robberies, and the departure of coaches, together with appeals for the return of strayed horses, lost dogs, and runaway apprentices, were more common than strictly trade advertisements. The many dogs of Charles II. were constantly getting lost or stolen, and the following description of a vanished favourite is supposed to have been dictated by the Merry Monarch himself: 'We must call upon you again for a Black Dog, between a greyhound and a spaniel, no white about him, only a streak on his brest, and Tayl a little bobbed. It is his Majesties' own Dog, and doubtless was stolen, for the Dog was not born or bred in

England, and would never forsake his master. Whosoever finds him may acquaint any at Whitehall, for the Dog was better known at Court than those who stole him. Will they never leave robbing his Majesty? must he not keep a Dog? This Dog's place (though better than some imagine) is the only place which nobody offers to beg.'

In 1664 all frivolous notices suddenly disappear, and the advertisement columns are filled with announcements of infallible specifics against the plague, as well as with religious warnings and exhortations to repentance. Of the Great Fire in 1666 we find but little mention, and tradesmen seem to have lost a splendid opportunity of puffing themselves and their wares. Although thousands of persons were camping in the fields, and streets and shops were extemporised for the public convenience, there are few notices of changed addresses, and none of 'alarming sacrifices of damaged stock' or statements that 'business will be carried on as usual during the repairs.'

In 1682 a certain John Houghton started a paper called 'A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry,' which was intended for the convenience of farmers and tradesmen, and consisted chiefly of price-lists and trade advertisements. With regard to these the proprietor states: 'I shall receive all sorts of advertisements, but shall answer for the reasonableness of none, unless I give a particular character on which may be *dependance*, but no argument that others deserve not as well.' The paper appears to have been conducted in most straightforward, honest fashion by worthy John Houghton, who actually found time to inquire into the merits of the servants and the masters who advertised in his columns. Many of these insertions read quaintly enough, for the editor addresses the public in his own person, and in most confidential terms, as, for example: 'I want a pritty boy to wait on a gentleman who will take care of him and put him out an apprentice.' 'I know of several curious women that would wait on ladies to be housekeepers.' 'I want a complete young man, that will wear livery, to wait on a very valuable gentleman, but he must know how to play a violin or a flute.'

The very limited extent of the London of that day is shown by the vagueness of some of the trade advertisements, which simply state that: 'Last week was imported Bacon by Mr. Edwards, Cheese by Mr. Francis, Joynted Babies by Mr. Harrison,' and so forth. After a time, however, it seems to have occurred

to the proprietor that it might be a convenience to his readers to know the advertisers' addresses, for he observes, in his usual simple, homely fashion: 'If desired I'll set down the places of abode, and I'm sure 'twill be of good use; for I am often asked it.' Mr. Houghton afterwards extended his connection among all circles, for his columns are filled with advertisements of doctors, lawyers, barbers, the sale of livings, and even matrimonial wants. In fact, he may be said to have done more than any one man to train his contemporaries in the art of advertising.

The theatrical managers were strangely slow in taking advantage of the new method of obtaining publicity. The first newspaper advertisement of a dramatic entertainment appeared in the 'Flying Post' for July 4, 1700. This was to the effect that at the New Theatre, Lincoln's Inn Fields, the 'Comical History of Don Quixote' will be acted, together with 'a new entry by the little boy, being his last time of dancing before he goes to France; also Mrs. Elford's new entry, never performed but once,' &c. The entertainment, it appears, was for the benefit of a gentleman in great distress, and his wife and three children.

The schoolmaster was already very much abroad, and he quickly became a proficient in the art of advertising. Early in the eighteenth century a Mr. Switterda announces that ladies and gentlemen who desire in a very short time to speak Latin, French, or High Dutch fluently, and can spare but two hours a week, will be faithfully taught by him according to a very easy and delightful method, full, plain, most expeditious and effectual. 'Everyone,' he continues, 'is to pay according to his quality from one to four guineas a month, but he (Mr. Switterda) will readier agree by the great.' A good contrast to the above is the plain and homely description of 'A school about forty miles from London. The master has had such success with boys as there are almost forty ministers and masters that were his scholars. His wife also teaches girls lace-making, plain work, raising paste, sauces and cooking to a degree of exactness. His price is 10*l.* or 11*l.* the year, with a pair of sheets and one spoon, to be returned if desired.'

Space being limited in eighteenth-century newspapers, advertisements were generally short and to the point, seldom exceeding eight lines of narrow measure. The usual price for an insertion of this kind was one shilling; but the 'Country Gentleman's Courant' introduced the innovation of charging by the line, giving

the following rather Irish reason for the change: 'Seeing that promotion of trade is a matter which ought to be encouraged, the price of advertisements is advanced to twopence a line.' A temporary blow was dealt to the art of advertising in 1712 by the imposition of a tax of three-and-sixpence upon each insertion; but after a depression lasting only a few months, we find the advertiser occupying as much space as ever in the columns of all the papers.

The rapid advance that had already been made in the art began to attract the attention of distinguished men, and in 1710 an article upon advertising appeared in the 'Tatler' from the pen of Addison. The writer states that it is his custom in dearth of news to entertain himself with the collections of advertisements that are published at the end of the public prints. 'These,' he continues, 'I consider accounts of the little world, in the same manner that the foregoing parts of the paper are from the great. . . . An advertisement from Piccadilly goes down to posterity with an article from Madrid, and John Bartlett of Goodman's Fields is celebrated in the same paper as the Emperor of Germany. The great art of writing advertisements is,' he explains, 'the finding out a proper method to catch the reader's eye, without which a good thing may pass unobserved, or be lost among commissions of bankruptcy. . . . But the great skill in an advertiser is chiefly seen in the style that he makes use of. He is to mention the "universal esteem" or "general approbation" of things that were never heard of. If he is a physician or astrologer he must change his lodging frequently; and though he never saw anybody in them beside his own family, give public notice of it "for the information of the nobility and gentry."' This article attracted the attention of a gentleman who, under the pseudonym of 'Self-interested Solicitor,' wrote to Mr. Isaac Bickerstaff to explain that he had made himself master of the whole art of advertising, both as to the style and the letter, and continued: 'Now if you and I could so manage it that nobody should write advertisements but myself, or print them anywhere but in your paper, we might both of us get estates in a little time.'

In 1759 Dr. Johnson followed Addison's example, and devoted an article in the 'Idler' to the same important subject. After remarking that the trade of advertising was then so near perfection that it was not easy to propose any improvement, he proceeds to remind every man who advertises his own excellence that 'he

should write with some consciousness of a character which dares to call the attention of the public. He should remember that his name is to stand in the same paper with that of the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Germany, and endeavour to make himself worthy of such association.' Johnson bestows ironical commendation upon the modest candour of the vendor of a beautifying fluid, which 'repels pimples, drives away freckles, smooths the skin, and plumps the flesh, but does not profess to restore the roses of fifteen to a lady of fifty'; while he also admires the zeal for the ease and safety of teething infants shown by the inventor of the Anodyne Necklace, and the affecting terms in which he warned every mother that she would never forgive herself if her infant should perish without a necklace. It would be interesting to know what the great Doctor thought of a certain advertisement in the 'Spectator' of a 'grateful electuary for the cure of loss of memory or forgetfulness, enabling those whose memory was before almost totally lost, to remember the minutest circumstances of their affairs to a wonder. Price two-and-sixpence a pot.'

No little insight into the social life of the eighteenth century may be gained by a study of contemporary advertisements. There are announcements of boxing matches and other athletic contests between women, an offer of ten shillings reward for the return of a South Sea dividend worth 630*l.*, a notice of a sale of silks, including 'Brocades, Tissues, Tabbies, Ducapes, Raschmores, &c.,' and numerous advertisements of negro boys, which last throw a curious light upon the manner in which our coloured brethren were regarded little more than a century ago. The following, which appeared in 1769 and 1779 respectively, are typical specimens of the latter class of advertisement: 'For sale, a chestnut gelding, a trim-whiskey, and a well-made, good-tempered black boy'; 'To be sold by auction, a black boy of fourteen, and a large mountain tiger-cat.'

The introduction, about the middle of the eighteenth century, of a system of numbering the houses and shops gradually led to the disappearance of the picturesque shop signs, which had attained to great size and a high degree of magnificence. The cost of these very effective trade advertisements varied from one hundred to five hundred pounds apiece, the most valuable being handed down from father to son as heirlooms.' Some of our most distinguished English artists—Morland, Hogarth, Cox, and Wilson—have not disdained in early days to lend their talents to the sign-painting art,

while the ironwork upon which the boards were hung gave scope for much gracefulness and originality of design. Still, the system of numbering the houses must have been a great convenience to all concerned, if we may judge from the clumsy and roundabout directions in such announcements as the following: 'To be Lett, Newbury House in S. James' Park, next door but one to Lady Oxford's, having two balls at the gate, and iron railings before the door.'

In matrimonial notices the fortune possessed by the bride was usually stated, as for example: 'On February 24, 1734, the Hon. Francis Godolphin of Scotland Yard Esq., to the third daughter of the Countess of Portland, a beautiful lady of 50,000*l.* fortune.' The lot of an heiress a hundred years ago was not invariably a happy one, judging from an advertisement which appeared in the 'Post' in 1775, and which seems to contain, between the lines, the nucleus of a romantic novel: 'A Gentleman of Honour and property, having in his disposal a young Lady of good Family, with a Fortune of 60,000*l.* on her marriage with his approbation, would be very happy to treat with a man of Fashion and Family, who may think it worth his while to give Advertiser a gratuity of 5,000*l.* on the day of Marriage.'

The art of advertising advanced slowly but steadily from the end of the eighteenth to the middle of the present century. The reduction of the tax upon newspaper advertisements in 1832, and the abolition of all duty in 1853, naturally gave a great impetus to this department of the art. There are now upwards of four thousand papers and magazines in the United Kingdom, and all of these devote more or less space to the needs of the advertiser, the 'Times' alone publishing more than three thousand advertisements daily. As civilisation has advanced the methods and opportunities of advertising have increased, so that it would be impossible so much as to enumerate them all unless we had the whole space of this magazine at our disposal. The old-fashioned bellman and sandwich-man are still with us, while the primitive billsticker, who used to paste over his rival's bills, is now represented by the contractor, who takes acres of hoarding and displays gigantic posters thereon to the best possible advantage. Railways and omnibuses have opened out new and brilliant opportunities to the advertiser, as have the electric light and various mechanical contrivances for attracting the attention of the public. Sky signs have fallen into disgrace, but the bilious yellow boards bearing

puffs of liver pills and lung tonic which have sprouted up in the fields to a distance of thirty or forty miles from London still flourish unchecked.

The society that has been started for the protection of wild nature from the outrages of the advertiser will have its hands full if the American fashion of puffing squalid and repulsive articles of commerce upon cliff, rock, and mountain and meadow continues to be imported into this country. Still, it must be confessed that, of late years, the art of advertising has improved in the matter of quality as well as of quantity. Enterprising tradesmen now give commissions to Royal Academicians, and the designing of newspaper and theatrical posters has become quite a recognised branch of pictorial art. This is as it should be, since no human power can stop the advance of advertisement. All that can now be done is to endeavour to make puffs and posters as picturesque as possible, and to prevent the desecration of historic buildings or beautiful scenery by the vandal inventor of soap, pill, or tonic.

AN INCIDENT FROM BORDERLAND.

I.

'Is that cigar all right, Probyn? And the toddy? You are sure? Because I am going to try your patience a little, old chap. I have a bit of a yarn to spin. Only—there is a surprise for you at the end of it.'

'Then let us come to the surprise as fast as we can, Houghton.'

That is one of the things that I like in Jack Probyn. With an old chum he never hesitates to speak straight out what he thinks.

He leaned back in the armchair I had given him, and fixed his eyes on the smoke climbing towards the ceiling. I do not mind admitting that his face expressed a shade of patient resignation.

'All right,' I assented; 'I will be brief. You know that I have this fine old house at a ridiculous rent?'

'Because your landlord is a fool.'

'Or because he could not get anyone to pay more—nor, indeed, let the house at all, till I took it.'

'On account of the apparition, ghost, spirit, spook, or the Lord knows what! Only you are not going to tell me about that, Houghton, I hope. I am quite able to understand the tenant's asserting the thing to exist, if that reduces the rent. But that anyone believes it, you will permit me to doubt.'

'The servants believe it, in consequence of which nothing will persuade them to stay. You will admit that it is a nuisance never to be able to keep any domestics. I am reduced to my coloured man, Pompey, who would not leave me were I quartered in Hades. Fortunately the boys are at Oxford; and as I have sent my wife and the girls to Brighton, I manage somehow. You have heard, I presume, what my wife and the girls say? They have got the ghost a little on the nerves.'

'A little, you call it! You did quite right to pack them off. Women imagine all sorts of things when a notion once gets into their heads.'

'Only I am getting rather sick of it all; that is why I want to talk to you about it.'

'Well, I take it you have not seen the ghost?'

'The first time I did so I took a blue pill.'

Probyn removed his cigar from his lips.

'Don't be an ass, Houghton.'

'A man is not an ass because he takes a blue pill. And when it happened again I went at once to see my medical man. A man has no right to see things of that kind.'

'Certainly not, I should say.'

I noticed that he was fidgeting with his shoulders.

'Do you feel a draught?' I asked.

'No; but I fancy it is rather cold.'

I put some more coals on the fire.

'What did the doctor say? I am a little curious to hear that,' asked Probyn, as I resumed my seat.

'Asked a lot of questions, and seemed a good deal puzzled. I could not make out that he understood what had happened any better than I did.'

'Doctor seems to belong to the same class as landlord. I should change him.'

'I thought of that, too. Then, to cut it short, I got him to come round here one evening, when it appeared that he was as much in need of medical treatment as myself.'

'You don't mean that he saw the spook, too?'

'He did. Though he attempted afterwards to deny it, and was as savage about the whole business as a bear.'

Probyn broke into a frank roar of laughter. When it ended, I asked:

'Would you mind looking behind you, in the direction of the bookshelves on your right?'

For the last three or four minutes I had seen seated there, on something resembling the dim outline of a high-backed chair, a shadowy form with which I was becoming tolerably familiar. It was that of an old gentleman with a pale, thin face, who wore a puce-coloured coat that had wide lappels and skirts trimmed with gold lace, a flowered satin waistcoat, a white cravat with laced ends, silk knee-breeches and stockings, and shoes with buckles. His hair was powdered, and tied at the back with a ribbon. The colours of his garments were a little difficult to distinguish. They seemed to come and go like an uncertain light that eludes the eyes. But the pale, translucent figure, and the darker, tall-backed chair, were very clearly defined, although the floor and the wall

beyond could be plainly seen through them. The old man's thin hands rested upon a gold-headed cane. Now and then he would rest his pointed chin upon them. At such moments the light in his eyes appeared to me to become more distinct, and to turn in different directions, as if he were looking about the room. Otherwise he never moved.

'By Jove!' exclaimed Probyn. 'I say, Houghton, how is that done?'

He continued to smoke whilst looking at the shadowy figure, perfectly at his ease. That is another thing I like in Jack Probyn: nothing ever disturbs his astounding mental equilibrium. The old man dropped his chin upon the top of his cane, and returned his regard.

'On my soul, Houghton, that's damned clever!' said Probyn. 'How the deuce do you manage it?'

He was looking round him, in search of some explanation of an optical delusion. Finding none, he rose and began walking about the room, turning his head to see whether the figure always remained visible.

'You can walk through him, if you like,' I remarked. 'You will find it rather cold, that is all.'

He immediately acted on my suggestion.

'That was a deuced queer sensation,' he remarked after making the experiment. 'Have you tried with a thermometer? Does it go down if you put it into him?'

'It does not. I tried.'

'Look here! Would you mind leaving the room for a minute, Houghton?'

'Not at all.'

On my return I asked, 'Well?'

'I fancied it depended on your presence. I see it does not. If we lower the gas—Ah!'—he had done so as he spoke—'now he is not so clear.'

'Wait till your eyes are accustomed to the gloom.'

'By Jove! you are right. He is more distinct than ever, only you can't see the colour of his clothes so well. How is it done, Houghton?'

'That is what I want to know.'

He was going round the room, looking under the chairs and tables, and moving the furniture.

'It fairly beats me,' he said at last with a laugh.

'Let us go into the dining-room, then; because it is rather cold here, is it not? We can come back by-and-by, if you like. He will be here until three o'clock in the morning.'

II.

IN the dining-room Probyn re-filled his glass and lit another cigar; we had brought the cigars and spirits with us. Then, leaning his shoulders against the chimneypiece, he said, 'That is about the cleverest thing I have ever seen, Houghton. But tell me straight, old chap—because I shall take your word, you know—it is not an optical dodge, but I am under some influence—hypnotic, or mesmeric, or something of that kind?'

'Not at all.'

'There is some hanky-panky, old chap?'

'None. You have simply seen what all the rest have seen; what the doctor saw; what anyone may see in the library from eleven o'clock on Saturday evening till three on Sunday morning: that is the old boy's time. I have watched him for some weeks now, and know.'

'On your word of honour, old chap?'

'On my word of honour.'

Probyn sat down, and smoked for some minutes in silence.

'Then I have seen a ghost,' he said at last. 'I did not believe that it was possible, but it seems that it is possible. One lives and learns.'

'I do not say that it is a ghost. I only say that it is there; that anyone can see it who chooses, and that I cannot account for it.'

Again Probyn was silent for some minutes. Then he asked: 'Have you spoken to him, Houghton?'

'Yes. I asked him his name.'

'Did he answer?'

'I fancied that I heard a sort of answer—in the air; just as if someone had said "Simon." But you know that vulgar report asserts the house to be haunted by a Sir Simon Sheriff, who lived here in the latter half of the eighteenth century. And I may have been self-deceived.'

'Possibly. That was all you could get him to say?'

'I asked some other questions, but I could not make out that I received any answers.'

'You have not had the floor up under the spot where he sits? Or received any hints from him about what he wants? He has not been pointing to a chink in the wall, where a thousand pounds lie concealed, or anything of that sort?'

'I regret to say that he has not. But I did have the floor up. I insisted that there was an escape of gas, or of something, and made them go down twenty feet to find it. Only, they found nothing. And I paid a long bill for my folly. I fancy I deserved it, you know.'

'Perhaps you did deserve it. What I said was nonsense.'

He had risen, and was again standing before the fire, smoking meditatively.

'I am thinking, Houghton,' he remarked, after a minute or two, 'your landlord is a fool. There cannot be two opinions about that. Now, look here, what would you pay to see a real ghost?'

'Taking into consideration the old gentleman in the next room, I don't think I would pay anything. I might give something to be rid of one.'

'Yes; but how many people do you suppose there are in London who would give ten guineas on the nail without an instant's hesitation to see a real apparition? Don't you perceive that there is money in that old gentleman in the next room? Why, Houghton, you might make a fortune out of him.'

I replied that I did not see exactly how that was to be done.

'You cannot do it alone,' admitted Probyn. 'We must get hold of one of those medium impostors who knows all the patter, and will work the whole concern in a superior way. Deuce take it, man! cannot you see that it is grand? You have a show here that would make the fortune of any Spiritualist in London.'

And gently pushing off his cigar-ash against the edge of the mantelpiece, he added, 'One of the things which has always convinced me that there are no haunted houses is the money that might be made out of one, if it existed.'

III.

WHEN Probyn has once taken a notion into his head there is no getting it out again. I had hoped that he might assist me to be rid of my nocturnal visitor. Instead, he had arrived at the conclusion that our old gentleman was a guest of the profitable kind. I did not see it. But I had to let him have his own way, and, after all, the result proved satisfactory. I had before that found things

placed in Jack Probyn's hands turn out satisfactorily, even when I least anticipated it. For which reason I assented the more easily to his proposals.

But I need not enter into the reasons why our choice of a 'medium' finally fell upon the celebrated Professor Sobieszczanski. We attended a *séance* conducted by the Professor (for which privilege we paid handsomely), and he certainly showed us some first-class hanky-panky. 'Only he is not in it with us, Houghton,' said Probyn. Nevertheless, we gave Professor Sobieszczanski to understand that we had been very much impressed. (I was very much impressed by his patter, which was really remarkable.) And we left him, I am sure, in the enjoyment of an agreeable conviction that we were going to let ourselves be fleeced easily; for which reason he also accepted an invitation to dine with me on the following Saturday.

It was about half-past ten when we moved from the dining-room to the library to smoke. Of course Probyn was with us. During dinner he had hung with great attention upon such words of wisdom as Professor Sobieszczanski vouchsafed us. They were not too many, for the fellow was an accomplished impostor. Nature herself had lent her assistance to his success in that direction. In person he was a tall man, whose closely shorn and sallow face, framed in his long, extraordinary black hair (dyed, I think), assisted the power to arrest attention of a singularly expressive mouth and queer, dark, restless eyes, that could, when he chose, fasten upon one with a disagreeable fixity. But his great gift was a soft, cultivated voice, in which he could talk in magnificent rounded periods, and with an air of superior knowledge, upon all the most abstruse questions of human philosophy and psychology. He was never for a moment at a loss. Occasionally he made hideous blunders that proved a crass ignorance of history, science, and everything else. But he was never daunted. Coolly presuming upon the still profounder ignorance of his hearers, he continued to roll out his soft periods until he reached whatsoever pretence or paradox he pleased. It was not the ordinary patter of his tribe. It was equally ridiculous and nonsensical, but was couched in language of his own. He spoke with a slight accent. I will not say that it was not a Polish one, being unacquainted with that tongue. But it seemed to me to belong to a land a good deal nearer the English Channel.

Towards the end of dinner Probyn had dropped one or two

hints that the house we were in was said to be haunted. The wary Sobieszczanski was instantly on his guard, and assured us that 'Though manifestations were undoubtedly to be looked for through the intervention of a responsive personality, ignorant rumours, based upon no sufficient acquaintance with the laws of the supernatural agencies, could not be accepted as evidence of any spiritual presence.'

We found that he did not smoke, nor would he accept anything in the shape of drink, except a *petit verre*.

Probyn had placed him in the position which he had himself occupied on the evening when I introduced Sir Simon to him, and began again to talk about the house being haunted.

The great Spiritualist smiled.

'An apparition seen by the maidservants, presumably?' he suggested.

'By some of them, I believe.'

Professor Sobieszczanski took a sip from his *petit verre*.

'It is singular,' he remarked, 'that when the odylic forces necessary to evoke the visible spiritual personality are admitted by all the initiated to be of rare occurrence even in the greatest mediums, every chance wench you may meet imagines that she can distinctly see an apparition.'

'Then to see is not so easy, even when the ghost is there?' asked Probyn.

'They are always there,' replied the Professor gravely.

'You don't say so! But how do you know that?'

'The initiated possess a susceptibility to the subtile impressions of their vicinity.'

Probyn looked at me. Sir Simon had taken his seat opposite us about a minute before. It did not appear from the manner in which Sobieszczanski sipped his *petit verre* that he was at all aware of the fact.

'Don't you think it rather cold here?' asked Probyn. 'Do you feel chilly, Professor Sobieszczanski?'

'It is, perhaps, a little chilly. But the night is cold.'

'Come nearer the fire,' I proposed.

Rising, I placed another seat for our visitor at my side. There he would be face to face with Sir Simon.

He crossed over, and was on the point of sitting down, when he gave a sudden start.

'Mon Dieu! - What is that?'

His sallow face was the colour of ashes. He staggered, and for a moment I believed he would fall, and put out my hand to save him. Then, casting his dignity to the winds, he jumped, with sudden agility, over the chair on which I had been seated, and made a bolt for the door.

Probyn and I had taken the precaution of locking it.

'Open the door! open the door!'

He stood in the corner, shaking with fear, fumbling at the handle, and quite unconscious, in his fright, that the key had been turned in the lock.

'I am afraid that you are not feeling well, Professor Sobieszczanski,' I said, coming to him. 'Permit me——'

I opened the door, and he shot out of the room like an arrow. He would, I believe, have bolted from the house if he had not been too confused to know where his hat and coat were, or which was the way to the front door. As it was we got him into the dining-room. There I thought the fellow would have fainted.

Probyn made him drink a stiff glass of brandy-and-water. That pulled him together a little.

'I am afraid you have never seen a real ghost before, Professor Sobieszczanski,' said Probyn.

He was leaning back against the sideboard, smoking very complacently.

The Professor looked at him, and then at me.

He was fairly dished—and he knew it. I am convinced that he must have been in other hobbles of the same kind before, because he came out of this one so neatly.

'You took me completely by surprise,' he remarked.

And he held out his hand for the brandy, which stood by Probyn on the sideboard.

Probyn passed it him, and also offered his cigar-case.

'Thanks,' said the Professor, and at once accepted a weed.

'You took me completely by surprise,' he repeated, with a smile of a very peculiar kind, as he threw the vesta Probyn had handed him into the fire, and crossed his legs unceremoniously, whilst puffing a great cloud of smoke. 'That was clever, too. I should like to see it done again presently. Only, of course, this is *entre nous*. I mean——'

'Oh, we perfectly understand,' returned Probyn. 'We are not going to blab. It is not our cue.'

The Professor looked relieved.

'You see, Sobieszczanski,' continued Probyn, 'yours is very pretty hanky-panky. You amused us very tolerably the other evening.'

'Oh, but, you know, there is really something in it,' replied the Professor. 'There are supernatural agencies against whose——'

'You can just stow all that, Professor, at once,' interrupted Probyn, now taking a seat at the table opposite him. 'Your show is all fudge; and you know it. But you are a first-class showman, and that is why we want to talk business to you; *business*, you understand. What we have here is a real apparition. It is a magnificent opening, but we don't see our way to work it. That is why we want you to come in with us, and do the show properly.'

'What do you mean by a real apparition?' inquired Sobieszczanski.

'The house is haunted. That is a real ghost you saw in the other room. He is there every Saturday, from eleven o'clock in the evening till three on Sunday morning.'

Professor Sobieszczanski took his cigar from his mouth, and poked his tongue into his thin cheek. The action was vulgar, but expressive.

'I understand your disbelieving it, Professor Sobieszczanski,' I remarked, 'but I assure you that such is the case. You are at liberty to come here any Saturday night you please to satisfy yourself.'

'Only you don't blow the gaff; and when you *have* satisfied yourself, you go into the business with us,' added Probyn.

'If not, we shall talk to Dr. Harris,' I concluded.

That made the Professor think. Dr. Harris was running him very close.

'I'll go and look at it again,' he said at last. 'How many minutes must I give you to get ready?'

'There is nothing to get ready.'

The Professor regarded us mistrustfully. But he took a good pull at his glass, and said, 'I'll go at once, then.'

We returned together to the library. As we entered the room the old gentleman dropped his chin on his hands and regarded us. Sobieszczanski stood looking at him.

'It is the best illusion I have ever seen,' he said.

He began going round the room just as Probyn had done, but scrutinising everything in a much more professional way.

'Walk through him,' said Probyn.

Sobieszczanski did so, and came back to us.

'You have beaten us all,' he said, in a tone of real admiration.

We returned to the dining-room—the library was so confoundedly cold.

'Well?' I asked.

'I'll give a thousand pounds to know how it is done,' said the Professor.

'I should think you would,' replied Probyn; 'only it is not *done* at all. You have at last seen a ghost. The question is, what will you pay to be allowed to bring a small party here on Saturday night?'

The Professor fidgeted in his chair. He knew too much of the tricks of his own trade to be quite able to credit what we told him. On the other hand, he had talked too much about ghosts to be able to disbelieve in them; and courage was evidently not his leading characteristic. Half scared, and wholly irresolute, he was an amusing specimen of a man drawn one way by his fears and another by his cupidity.

'If you funk it,' said Probyn, 'we'll go to Harris.'

'No, no! Don't go to Harris.'

'All right. Then let us come to terms.'

Professor Sobieszczanski showed an inclination to temporise. I believe now that the man was in a much greater fright than we suspected. The considerable quantity of spirits that he had drunk had also loosened his tongue, and he wanted us to listen to some of his rodomontade. But at last he agreed to pay ten guineas for the privilege of bringing a small, select party to the house on the following Saturday.

'It is dirt cheap, and we shall not let you come on those terms a second time, you know,' said Probyn.

I had doubts whether he would come at all. Probyn laughed at me. And he was right. The Professor's cupidity was more powerful than his fears. He arrived at about a quarter-past ten with his party, eight ladies and two gentlemen: not very intellectual specimens of humanity.

'Give me a glass of something stiff,' he gasped, coming into the dining-room, 'or I shall never get through it.'

'Take care; you are pretty well on already, you know,' observed Probyn.

The assistant was arranging the spectators in the library.

'We ought to have something preliminary: a few manifestations of the ordinary kind, to lead up to the final materialisation,' said Sobieszczanski. 'Another time I'll arrange a little show, just to work up the effect. I can't to-night. I must be content with speaking a few words. If it comes off, anyhow, Harris will be nowhere.'

The perspiration was standing in beads on his forehead.

We proceeded to the library, and the Professor spoke his few words. Speaking when he was more than half-seas over was evidently not new to him. A silence of breathless expectation followed.

Stepping back to where we stood, behind the semicircle of seated watchers, the Professor placed himself at our side, and began wiping the perspiration from his forehead. He was as white as a sheet, and shaking like an aspen.

One of the women saw Sir Simon first, and gave such a shriek as I never heard in my life. Two minutes afterwards we were engaged in carrying out of the library four others who had fainted. The situation was one perfectly familiar to the Professor and his assistant, and caused them no embarrassment; indeed, I am convinced that the Professor was glad of the excuse for leaving the haunted room.

Our old gentleman was evidently surprised by the number of his visitors, and had immediately dropped his chin on his hands. He seemed to me, also, anything but pleased.

We got rid of our party before midnight. Sobieszczanski was as sober as a judge and in high spirits.

'It will be all over the place to-morrow, and Harris will be fit to eat his hat,' he said.

But the real *séance* was reserved for Probyn and myself.

As we returned to the dining-room after locking the front door—I with Sobieszczanski's cheque for ten guineas in my hand—what was my surprise to see Sir Simon standing at the open door of the library!

'Hulloa, Sir Simon!' exclaimed Probyn.

The shadowy old man turned to me.

'I am not going to be treated like this, sir—to be made a spectacle of in my own house,' I heard him say distinctly and angrily, in that thin voice of the dead, who, according to Shakespeare, can but 'gibber and squeak.'

I made a bow.

‘I beg your pardon, Sir Simon ; I am the tenant of the house. I can show you my landlord’s agreement, and his receipt for my last quarter’s rent. If you insist upon occupying one of our most convenient rooms, and making us all very uncomfortable, it is at least fair that you should contribute something towards the rent—and other expenses.’

I showed him the cheque.

‘I am not going to be made a spectacle of for money, sir!’ retorted the thin voice.

We left him, and lighted our cigars in the dining-room.

‘The old boy is put out,’ remarked Probyn presently, whilst we discussed the events of the evening. ‘I wonder whether he has gone back to his chair.’

He left the room, and in a minute returned with the intelligence, ‘Sir Simon has disappeared!’

‘What is the time?’

‘Only half-past twelve.’

And we never saw him again, though Probyn and I watched for him for weeks, until we were convinced that he had taken his final departure. When all hope, or fear, of his reappearance was over Professor Sobieszczanski wept.

‘I had that charlatan Harris on toast,’ he said. ‘And now he is going about saying it was a mere optical delusion, like his own contemptible dodges.’

For my part, I gave the ten guineas to a hospital, and was glad to be relieved of the old gentleman.

But the other day, when I was talking to Probyn about it, he said, ‘We made a pair of fools of ourselves over that business, Houghton. We killed the goose with the golden eggs. To think what might have been made out of that old boy if he had been properly managed!’

HAVANA.

WHEREVER the eye rests the scene is wholly unfamiliar to Northern eyes. On the green hills the graceful, umbrella-like palms and cocoanuts and the huge-leaved bananas fling their branches to the breeze. The houses, that are separated from the city and scattered about the surrounding shores, are low and rambling, and are either white, or, more odd still, blue, or pink, or green. Hardly has the great anchor rattled and splashed into the waters of the tranquil harbour before the ship is besieged by the most irregular-looking small boats. They are short and broad, and so strong that one might feel safe at sea in one. Each has an awning upon an arched frame over the after-part to shield the passenger from the sun's rays, and these awnings are painted, like the houses, in one bright colour or another, so that altogether they make the scene picturesque, and call to mind the hues of an Italian water view. Into one of these boats you descend, and your boatman, spreading a small sail, guides you to the landing before you have satisfied yourself with staring at the tropic vegetation, the swarm of boats, the men-of-war, the white forts, and the bareheaded women and coolly-clad men who have come out from the city in other boats to greet your fellow-passengers. Perhaps you do not notice it at once, but you are able to see farther and better than at home, for the air is usually as clear as crystal. You will notice, later on, that the sky is similarly clear, and as for the nights, they are beautiful beyond description. At the landing you find a cab convenient, and a hackman who will take you on any short journey for twenty cents. When comfort is considered, it will be found that riding in one of these comfortable victorias is far cheaper than walking.

You tell the coachman to drive you to one of the principal hotels. There are several that more or less nearly approach Cuban perfection: the Pasaje, Telegrafo, San Carlos, Inglaterra, America, or Europe; terms, \$3 to \$5 a day. Drive slowly, for from whatever part of the world you may come, rest assured you will never before have encountered such streets, houses, stores, or customs as will now be noticeable on every hand. The streets are very narrow; the sidewalks are seldom more than two feet wide in the older

parts of the city; the houses are mainly broad and low, three-storey buildings being rare and one-storey structures quite common. You notice that everything is made to serve comfort and coolness. Instead of having panes of glass, the windows are open and guarded by light iron railings, and the heavy wooden doors are left ajar. You see into many houses as you pass along, and very cool and clean they look. There are marble floors, cane-seated chairs and lounges, thin lace curtains, and glimpses of courts in the centre of each building, often with green plants or gaudy flowers growing in them between the parlour and the kitchen. You will find much the same plan at your hotel. You may walk in at the doors or the dining-room windows, just as you please, for the sides of the house seem capable of being all thrown open; while in the centre of the building you see the blue sky overhead. Equally cool do all the inhabitants appear to be, and the wise man who consults his own comfort will do well to follow the general example. Even the soldiers wear straw hats. The gentlemen are clad in underwear of silk or Lisle thread and suits of linen, drill, or silk, and the ladies are equally coolly appressed. Havana is a dressy place, and you will be astonished at the neatness and style to which the tissue-like goods worn there are made to conform. But come and see the apartment you are to rest in every night. Ten to one the ceiling is higher than you ever saw one in a private house, and the huge windows open upon a balcony overlooking a verdant plaza. The floor is of marble or tiling, and the bed is an ornate iron or brass affair, with a tightly stretched sheet of canvas or fine wire netting in place of the mattresses you are used to. You could not sleep on a mattress with any proper degree of comfort in the tropics. There is a canopy with curtains overhead, and everything about the room is pretty certain to be scrupulously clean. Conspicuous there and everywhere else that you go is a rocking-chair. Rocking-chairs are to be found in rows in the houses and in regiments in the clubs.

You will want to purchase some things, and the best shopping streets are Obispo Street, O'Reilly Street, and Riela, commonly called Muralla Street. The shopkeepers have a way of throwing the entire fronts of their stores open in most cases, while in others, behind plate-glass in true New York style, are exposed fine collections of jewellery, silks, dry goods, bonnets, pictures, or *bric-à-brac*. You will notice that the Havanese have solved the bothersome American problem how to prevent storekeepers from littering

and blocking the sidewalk with goods. They have solved it simply by making the sidewalk too small to put anything on. Those irrepressible men and women who are ever on the alert to make profitable purchases in foreign lands will find bargains in Spanish laces, fans, and parasols, in the light goods that men wear, in the Spanish wines and liquors, and the Cuban cigars and jellies. The cheap street, like the Eighth Avenue or Bowery of New York, is Principe Alfonso, which your driver will know better if you call it Monte. You will notice with surprise that every store, instead of bearing the title of the proprietary firm, is called by a fancy name—viz. El Pueblo, Las Delicias, El Gallo, or more commonly by women's names, such as Rosita, Adelina, Antonica, or America. America is a woman's name in Cuba. They are great advertisers, and the sign 'Post no bills' in Spanish is commoner than you expect to find it outside of Boston. Those storekeepers do best who put awnings across the streets, and thus display their names and confer a public benefit as well. Shade is perfect coolness in Cuba. The sun is hot there, not damp and suffocating as here, but dry and tingling; and you step out of it beneath a tree or awning, and are cool at once. Then the mornings and evenings are delightful, and you will find these the best hours for your sight-seeing expeditions.

Havana is the metropolis of the West Indies. It has more life and bustle than all the rest of the Archipelago put together. If you are German, English, Scotch, Dutch, American, French, or whatever you are, you will find fellow-countrymen among its quarter of a million souls. There is a public spirit there which is rare in those climes. The theatres astonish you by their size and elegance. They are the Tacon, Payret, Nuevo Liceo, Verano, Cervantes, and the Circus, called Circo de Jane. Some of these have five galleries, and one, the Tacon, can accommodate 6,000 persons at a ball or 3,000 in the seats. It ranks fourth in size in the world. The Verano is a tropical establishment all open at the sides, and the Circus can be thrown open to the sky. The aristocratic club is the Union, but the popular one is the Casino Español, whose club-house is a marvel of tropical elegance and beauty. Nearly all these attractions are on or near the broad, shady, and imposing thoroughfare, the Prado—a succession of parks leading from the water opposite the Morro Castle almost across the city. In one or another of these parks a military band plays on three evenings of the week, and the scene on such occasions is wholly

new to English eyes. It is at such times that one may see the beautiful Spanish and Cuban women. They do not leave their houses in the heat of the day unless something requires them to do so, and when they do they remain in their carriages, and are accompanied by a servant or elderly companion. So strict is the privacy with which they are surrounded, that you shall see them shopping without quitting their carriages, waited on by the clerks, who bring the goods out to the vehicles.

But when there is music under the laurels or palms the señoritas, in their light draperies, and wearing nothing on their heads save the picturesque mantilla of old Spain, assemble on the paths, the seats, the sidewalks, and in the carriages, and there the masculine element repairs and is very gallant indeed. Here you will listen to the dreamy melody of these latitudes, Spanish love-songs and Cuban waltzes so softly pretty that you wonder all the world does not sing and play them. On other nights the walk or drive along the Prado is very interesting. You pass some of the most elegant of the houses, and notice that they are two storeys high, and that the family apartments are on the upper storeys, so that you miss the furtive views of the families at meals, and of ladies reclining in the broad-tiled window sills, that you have in the older one-storey sections of the city. When you see the carriages in the broad, stone-floored hallways, you are reminded of the story of the youth who came back from Havana to New York, and informed his friends that 'in Havana they have the carriages in the front parlour, and cigars grow on trees.'

'No,' said a Cuban girl who was present. 'That is not so. Cigars do not grow on trees there.'

But it is no more fair to say that the carriages are in the parlours than it would be to say the same thing of the English basement houses that were popular when building-room was not so dear in New York as it is now; for it will be remembered that they contained a carriage-way, and, indeed, were in many respects very like these two-storey Cuban houses. The smooth, stuccoed fronts of these houses, the huge, barred windows, which permit everything to be thrown open to the breeze, the inviting balconies overhead, and the general cleanness of the interiors, will greatly interest you. The parks along the way are very pretty, especially that of Isabella II., whose statue looks a little like Victoria's; and the Indian Park, in which is a fountain embracing a statue of an Indian princess, the most artistic and ambitious public work

in the city. One block away, immediately behind the Hotel Pasaje, is a very great curiosity, a piece of the old wall of Havana. It marks the line between the old and the new city, and indicates the rapid growth of the newer portion. In this neighbourhood also is the Tacon Market, one of the largest and finest in the world. Do not miss a sight of its tropical commodities. Eat sparingly of the fruits, and remember that those who understand them are content with the refreshing juices of such of them as the pineapple, mango, and orange, and do not attempt to eat the pulp. The green coconuts that you see in such profusion are not full of meat like the ripe ones you get in America: they are merely vessels full of a cool, refreshing water. Drink all you want of it: it is cooling and nourishing. In any of the *cafés* that are so plentiful in the city you can get a big glass of *agua de coco* for a few pence. Tamarind-water is another excellent drink to be had at all refreshment counters. It cools the blood and regulates the stomach. Lemonade, which they make of juicy little limes, is also an excellent refreshment. Ice, made by man and not by Nature, is as plentiful as in New York. There are other markets—the Colon and the Cristina—and you should see them both in order to realise the wonders of this most rich and fertile soil and magic climate.

For expeditions on foot you have many points near at hand. First, there is the short walk to the cathedral. It is rather a shabby-looking edifice outside, for the volcanic stone so abundant in Cuba has not been plastered over, as is usually the case; but the surprise will be all the greater when you enter and see how costly and beautiful the interior is. The altar is exceptionally magnificent, and beside it rest the remains of him they call Cristobal Colon, known to all the rest of the world as Christopher Columbus. Persons of the sort who disbelieve in anything, from the miracle of Jonah and the whale to the authorship of Shakespeare's plays, will tell you that Columbus' ashes are somewhere else; but the weight of evidence is against that theory. A few steps distant is the oratory, El Templete, a monument to mark the spot where, in distant centuries, the first Mass ever said in Havana was celebrated. It is not so easy to believe, as they tell you, that the beautiful tree in the enclosure is the identical one under which the celebration took place; but the spot is especially interesting from the fact that, when Columbus' remains were first brought to Havana, it was in this little temple that they were

deposited. But do not leave the cathedral without having asked one of the clergy to let you look at the treasures stored in the anteroom to the left of the altar. This is one of the most notable sights in Cuba. In the closets are utensils of silver and gold in use before the altar on feast days; and one cupboard contains a triumph of the silversmith's art. It is a Gothic tower of the most elaborate and artistic design, all in pure silver, and ornamented with gold, jewels, and delicate filigree work. In the numerous drawers along the walls are the dresses worn by the clergy on special occasions, garments of silk and satin, encrusted or embroidered with gold and silver, and set with precious stones.

In this neighbourhood are other old churches; the big Government House and its little park, hemmed in by the bustle of downtown trade; the Fish Market, and the Mole, a covered *levée* about a mile in length, at which you landed, and which you will find interesting if you visit it again. Here, exposed as you are not accustomed to see them, are the products of all nations, newly removed from incoming vessels mainly by means of lighters, because of the scarcity of wharf room. It is a market place where, in the morning, you will see a great crowd of merchants, boatmen, labourers, gathered to buy and sell, and to employ and tender service. The bales and boxes, you see, are captured as resting-places by the boatmen, hackmen, and even the soldiers and custom-house men, and you begin to be impressed by something that you will do well to profit by—the fact that, as a rule, everybody takes life easily, and makes his habits and his business conform to the general custom. Business men go to their counting rooms early and do not leave them until late in the afternoon, except to breakfast at half-past ten or eleven o'clock. All Cuba, when it first gets up in the morning, takes a cup of coffee, and partakes of but two meals during the day—breakfast before noon and dinner at five or six o'clock. Accustom yourself to the same rule. Bathing should be indulged in between coffee and breakfast.

To see the utmost possibilities of comfortable living in Havana do not content yourself with driving in company with the fashionable folk in the Paseo de Carlos III., the beautiful, almost Parisian boulevard leading to the Captain-General's residence, but continue on to Cerro and Jesus de Monte, two fashionable suburbs of the city. In Cerro are some of the most palatial residences in Cuba. Great white houses they are, embowered in the verdant and gaudy splendour of well-kept tropic gardens, cooled by broad

verandahs whose roofs are supported by pretty Grecian pillars, and under which, in perfect enjoyment of the clear yet perfumed air, are gathered the young and old in the inevitable rocking-chairs. Pass by in the evening, and peep in where the mellow light of shaded lamps falls upon oriental rugs, soft laces, marble floors, rare and costly carvings and paintings, and upon the quiet families of blonde women and dark-skinned men bent over embroidery, books, or newspapers, or sipping ices and listening to the soft melody of the country: is there not something in all this for us business-ridden Britons to envy as well as admire? Vedado, also, should be visited. It compares with Cerro as Hoboken does with Brooklyn; but, though not aristocratic, it is very pretty. Then, for a longer and more rural expedition one should see the new Water Works, which are regarded as among the most notable engineering achievements of the time.

Then there is Marianao (pronounced Marry-a-now), a pretty place, loved for its cool breezes and its handiness to the sea-side, where there are bathing booths and little restaurants for excursionists. You go there by rail in quick time. Chorrera, a quaint fishing hamlet at the mouth of the Almendares River, is equally accessible. Here you may see the simple houses and interesting customs of the peasantry, as well as the odd vegetation and luxuriant verdure of the country. In the other direction, by taking the ferry to Regla, and a coach from there, is reached the interesting town of Guanabacoa, which rejoices in a mineral spa. Puentes Grandes, which means the Big Bridge, is a popular picnicing place; and another interesting journey is that one out to the mysterious old fort or castle upon a little rocky isle a few miles west of the city. The American Consul will cheerfully equip you with permits to see the famous fortifications. A more considerable journey, and yet one that can be quickly and easily accomplished, is that into the Vuelta Abajo, where the world-famous tobacco for the best cigars is raised. But far more interesting, and easily accomplishable between coffee and breakfast, is a trip to a sugar plantation. A permit can easily be got, but it must be obtained in Havana. The writer was equipped with one admitting him to the Toledo plantation, only half-an-hour distant on the Marianao Railroad. First he saw the mansion of the planter, a grand establishment, bigger than most city blocks, only one storey in height, yet taller than a two-storey-and-basement building at home. It rose out of a beautiful garden like a palace

of marble, and seemed eloquent of comfort as well as of the wealth and magnificence that, alas! have not, in most cases, withstood the trials of a revolution at home and an intense competition abroad. A gateway led into the estate, and here the porter took our permit and bade us follow the inviting road that led between waving fields of bright-green cane. At short distances broad roads intersected the fields to permit the labourers to gather the product and transport it easily. And here was an old-fashioned plantation slave scene—a cane break swarming with negroes. It was wonderful to see the men handle the machetes—broad, long, one-edged knives, the size of small swords. The glistening blades moved with the swiftness of thought. With one blow the cane-stalk was cut close to the ground, with another the leafy top was cut off, and then, as each man tossed a cane from him, he dealt it another blow in mid air and cut it in two. Other men and some women gathered up the canes, stripped them of leaves, and loaded waggons with them. A picturesque throng they were, thinly clad and hard at work, yet stout and strong and happy looking, and all standing on the very threshold of liberty. The cane was transported to the mill house—a vast, open building, distinguished by a tall smoking chimney and the loud hum of unceasing industry. Into a great run-way the cane was piled, and down that it slid into the jaws of two great rollers that squeezed and crushed the juices from it and cast out the dry and mangled stalks, while a flood of raw liquid sugar poured into the troughs below. On a second flooring overhead was the row of huge boilers or kettles, through a series of which this juice must pass before it is resolved into sugar; and finally were seen the centrifugal machines, from which it issued in small, dry, light-brown crystals, to be packed in bags by the long line of negroes at work there. The heavy odour of the sugar, not unlike the smell of malt, though sweeter, pervaded the great building, which, despite the boilers and kettles, was cool and pleasant. Then there were the slave quarters—a hollow square walled in by dormitories two storeys high, with a store full of supplies of clothing, medicines, and food, and a hospital room and nursery, and ever so many half-nude, shiny-black piccaninnies playing about. The shaded, cool house of the administrator or superintendent, where the plantation doctor, mounted on a big American horse, was paying a morning visit, was also picturesque.

But you will be a long while in Havana before you will have seen all these curious sights. Havana itself is a mine of pleasure

and a museum of curiosities. You will not care to bustle around when you get there as you do in America, or Switzerland, or Canada. The very atmosphere bids you rest and enjoy yourself. And not only that, it is medicinal, curative, and strengthening. Here are men and women, almost crippled at home and in the United States by rheumatism, now forgetful of their ailment and its vanished pains. Here throat and lung troubles, no longer harassed by damp breezes and sudden changes of temperature, are cured without medicine in a month, after the best physicians at home have failed to remove them. Here is a climate as reliable as the coming of day and night, never as cool as springtime in England or as hot as midsummer in London. When snow and ice bind up all nature in our country the thermometer daily points to 65° or 70° in Havana; the grass and cane and foliage are brilliantly green, the flowers are blooming, the fruit is ripening, the birds are chanting in the boughs, and day and night succeed day and night under a sky seldom even flecked by clouds. The winter passes, the spring comes, and the mercury slowly rises 5° to 10°, and 75° to 80° is the temperature. The foliage takes on a darker green, the cane is harvested, the fruit is plucked, and the country-sides grow slightly brown for need of the long-awaited rain. When May is well ushered in the heat comes, and those Cubans who can afford it, together with those Americans who are able to enjoy perpetual summer, quit the verdant isle for Europe or the United States. Then the rainy season begins, and the days are very hot by contrast with the cool breezy nights.

From October until May Havana is an earthly paradise for tired or ill or weak or pleasure-loving Americans, and thousands who go there are satisfied not to leave it except to return to their homes. Unceasing is the interest one feels in this strange city. Hour after hour, and day after day may be spent in that climate, seated before the hotel, or at one's bedroom window, or on a balcony, merely watching the odd scenes constantly spread to the gaze. Soldiers in uniforms of a sort of blue jean, and with broad-brimmed straw hats, are as numerous here as horses in New York. They pass in couples, squads, or companies. The music of their bands rouses you in the morning and soothes you at night. There are four sorts of policemen, and in the lazy mood you will possess it will interest you for many days to learn to distinguish one sort from another and the name that each sort goes by. Do not let their presence mar your anticipations. They will not trouble you.

You will be as free from interference or restraint in Havana as in London—far freer. They still maintain the useless, old-fogey night watch, composed of men in glazed hats and dark uniforms, each equipped with a lantern, and carrying a staff something like a boat-hook and a spear combined. The lumbering carts, the long trains of horses or mules coming in from the country laden with fruit, vegetables, jerked beef, or what not; the milkmen carrying the milk in little cans packed away in panniers on a horse's back; the butchers vending their meat from waggons with lattice-work sides; the Chinese carrying their wares balanced at the ends of a pole upon one shoulder, like animated scales moving through the streets; the children selling 'panales'—little cakes of flaky sugar, to be melted in a glass of water and drank: a habit which reminds one of the old saying that, 'for those who like that sort of thing, one would think that would be just the sort of thing they would like.' These are but a few of the queer sights. Very interesting, also, are the thin but swift little Cuban horses; and, whether you will or not, the vendors of lottery tickets will claim your attention. In the street, in the store, at your meals, at your window, in the cars—in short, wherever you are, except when you are in a private house or in your bed—these remarkably enterprising peddlers will plead with you to try your luck. Chances in several lotteries are sold in Havana—viz. the Havana, Madrid, Kentucky, Mexico, and Porto Rico, and a large semi-idle portion of the population hawk the tickets about. The cigar and cigarette factories, whose brands are world famous, are objects of interest to the tourist, and the proprietors are not averse to exhibiting their establishments. The deft touch and rapid movement of the skilful Cuban cigarmakers is interesting to most persons, and the modern machinery for turning out thousands of cigarettes in an hour would surprise a professional machinist.

Then there is the Carnival period before Lent, when all Havana lends itself to jollity, and visitors have many opportunities to observe the Cuban dancing—a dreamy sort of poetry materialised. Sundays are observed rather as feast days than solemn occasions; and then the bull-fights, theatres, circus, and opera may be enjoyed, as well as the evening music in the park. And all the time one is certain to enjoy good food, luscious fruits, excellent attendance, and the kindness of a very polite and hospitable community.

THE SOWERS.

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,

AUTHOR OF 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

À DEUX.

STEINMETZ laid Etta on a sofa. She was already recovering consciousness. He rang the bell twice, and all the while he kept his eye on De Chauxville. A quick touch on Etta's wrist and breast showed that this man knew something of women and of those short-lived fainting fits that belong to strong emotions.

The maid soon came.

'The Princess requires your attention,' said Steinmetz, still watching De Chauxville, who was looking at Etta and neglecting his opportunities.

Steinmetz went up to him and took him by the arm.

'Come with me,' he said.

The Frenchman could have taken advantage of the presence of the servant to effect a retreat, but he did not dare to do so. It was essential that he should obtain a few words with Etta. To effect this he was ready even to face an interview with Steinmetz. In his heart he was cursing that liability to inconvenient fainting fits that makes all women uncertain in a moment of need.

He preceded Steinmetz out of the room, forgetting even to resent the large warm grasp on his arm. They went through the long dimly-lit passage to the old part of the castle, where Steinmetz had his rooms.

'And now,' said Steinmetz, when they were alone with closed doors—'and now, De Chauxville, let us understand each other.'

De Chauxville shrugged his shoulders. He was not thinking of Steinmetz yet. He was still thinking of Etta and how he could get speech with her. With the assurance which had carried him through many a difficulty before this, the Frenchman looked round him, taking in the details of the room. They were in the apartment beyond the large smoking-room—the anteroom, as it were, to the little chamber where Paul kept his medicine-chest,

his disguise, all the compromising details of his work among the peasants. The broad writing-table in the middle of the room stood between the two men.

'Do you imagine yourself in love with the Princess?' asked Steinmetz suddenly, with characteristic bluntness.

'If you like,' returned the other.

'If I thought that it was that,' said the German, looking at him thoughtfully, 'I would throw you out of the window. If it is anything else, I will only throw you downstairs.'

De Chauxville bit his thumbnail anxiously. He frowned across the table into Steinmetz's face. In all their intercourse he had never heard that tone of voice; he had never seen quite that look on the heavy face. Was Steinmetz aroused at last? Steinmetz aroused was an unknown quantity to Claude de Chauxville.

'I have known you now for twenty-five years,' went on Karl Steinmetz, 'and I cannot say that I know any good of you. But let that pass; it is not, I suppose, my business. The world is as the good God made it. I can do nothing towards bettering it. I have always known you to be a scoundrel—a fact to be deplored—and that is all. But so soon as your villainy affects my own life, then, my friend, a more active recognition of it is necessary.'

'Indeed!' sneered the Frenchman.

'Your villainy has touched Paul's life, and at that point it touches mine,' continued Karl Steinmetz with slow anger. 'You followed us to Petersburg—thence you dogged us to the Government of Tver. You twisted that foolish woman, the Countess Lanovitch, round your finger, and obtained from her an invitation to Thors. All this in order to be near one of us. *Ach!* I have been watching you. Is it only after twenty-five years that I at last convince you that I am not such a fool as you are pleased to consider me?'

'You have not convinced me yet,' put in De Chauxville with his easy laugh.

'No, but I shall do so before I have finished with you. Now, you have not come here for nothing. It is to be near one of us. It is not Miss Delafield; she knows you. Some women—good women—have an instinct given to them by God for a defence against such men—such things as you. Is it I?'

He touched his broad chest with his two hands, and stood defying his lifelong foe.

'Is it me that you follow? If so, I am here. Let us have done with it now.'

De Chauxville laughed. There was an uneasy look in his eyes. He did not quite understand Steinmetz. He made no answer. But he turned and looked at the window. It is possible that he suddenly remembered the threat concerning it.

'Is it Paul?' continued Steinmetz. 'I think not. I think you are afraid of Paul. Remains the Princess. Unless you can convince me to the contrary, I must conclude that you are trying to get a helpless woman into your power.'

'You always were a champion of helpless ladies,' sneered De Chauxville.

'Ah! You remember that, do you? I also—I remember it. It is long ago, and I have forgiven you; but I have not forgotten. What you were then you will be now. Your record is against you.'

Steinmetz was standing with his back to what appeared to be the only exit from the room. There were two other doors concealed in the caken panels, but De Chauxville did not know that. He could not take his eyes from the broad face of his companion, upon which there were singular blotches of colour.

'I am waiting,' said the German, 'for you to explain your conduct.'

'Indeed!' replied De Chauxville. 'Then, my friend, you will have to continue waiting. I fail to recognise your right to make inquiry into my movements. I am not responsible to any man for my actions, least of all to you. The man who manages his neighbour's affairs mismanages his own. I would recommend you to mind your own business. Kindly let me pass.'

De Chauxville's words were brave enough, but his lips were unsteady. A weak mouth is apt to betray its possessor at inconvenient moments. He waved Steinmetz aside, but he made no movement towards the door. He kept the table between him and his companion.

Steinmetz was getting calmer. There was an uncanny hush about him.

'Then I am to conclude,' he said, 'that you came to Russia in order to persecute a helpless woman. Her innocence or her guilt are, for the moment, beside the question. Neither is any business of yours. Both, on the contrary, are my affair. Innocent or guilty, the Princess Howard-Alexis must from this moment be freed from your persecution.'

De Chauxville shrugged his shoulders. He tapped on the floor impatiently with the toe of his neat riding-boot.

'*Allons !*' he said. 'Let me pass.'

'Your story of Sydney Bamborough,' went on Steinmetz, coldly, 'was a good one wherewith to frighten a panic-stricken woman. But you brought it to the wrong person when you brought it to me. Do you suppose that I would have allowed the marriage to take place unless I knew that Bamborough was dead ?'

'You may be telling the truth about that incident, or you may not,' said De Chauxville. 'But my knowledge of the betrayal of the Charity League is sufficient for my purpose.'

'Yes,' admitted Steinmetz grimly, 'you have information there with possibilities of mischief in it. But I shall discount most of it by telling Prince Pavlo to-night all that I know, and I know more than you do. Also, I intend to seal your lips before you leave this room.'

De Chauxville stared at him with a dropping lip. He gulped down something in his throat. His hand was stealing round under the fur jacket to a pocket at the back of his trousers.

'Let me out !' he hissed.

There was a gleam of bright metal in the sunlight that poured in through the window. De Chauxville raised his arm sharply, and at the same instant Steinmetz threw a book in his face. A loud report, and the room was full of smoke.

Steinmetz placed one hand on the table and, despite his weight, vaulted it cleanly. This man had taken his degree at Heidelberg, and the Germans are the finest gymnasts in the world. Moreover, muscle, once made, remains till death. It was his only chance, for the Frenchman had dodged the novel, though it had spoilt his aim. Steinmetz vaulted right on to him, and De Chauxville staggered back.

In a moment Steinmetz had him by the collar; his face was grey, his heavy eyes ablaze. If anything will rouse a man, it is being fired at point-blank at a range of four yards with a .280 revolver.

'*Ach !*' gasped the German; 'you would shoot me, would you ?'

He wrenched the pistol from De Chauxville's fingers and threw it into the corner of the room. Then he shook the man like a garment.

'First,' he cried, 'you would kill Paul, and now you try to

shoot me. Good God! what are you? You are no man. Do you know what I am going to do with you? I am going to thrash you like a dog!

He dragged him to the fireplace. Above the mantelpiece a stick-rack was affixed to the wall, and here were sticks and riding-whips. Steinmetz selected a heavy whip. His eyes were shot with blood; his mouth worked beneath his moustache.

'So,' he said, 'I am going to settle with you at last.'

De Chauxville kicked and struggled, but he could not get free. He only succeeded in half-choking himself.

'You are going to swear,' said Steinmetz, 'never to approach the Princess again—never to divulge what you know of her past life.'

The Frenchman was almost blue in the face. His eyes were wild with terror.

And Karl Steinmetz thrashed him.

It did not last long. No word was spoken. The silence was only broken by their shuffling feet, by the startling report of each blow, by De Chauxville's repeated gasps of pain.

The fur jacket was torn in several places. The white shirt appeared here and there. In one place it was stained with red.

At last Steinmetz threw him huddled into one corner of the room. The chattering face, the wild eyes that looked up at him, were terrible to see.

'When you have promised to keep the secret you may go,' said Steinmetz. 'You must swear it.'

De Chauxville's lips moved, but no sound came from them. Steinmetz poured some water into a tumbler and gave it to him.

'It had to come to this,' he said, 'sooner or later. Paul would have killed you; that is the only difference. Do you swear by God in Heaven above you that you will keep the Princess's secret?'

'I swear it,' answered De Chauxville hoarsely.

Steinmetz was holding on to the back of a high chair with both hands, breathing heavily. His face was still livid. That which had been white in his eyes was quite red.

De Chauxville was crawling towards the revolver in the corner of the room, but he was almost fainting. It was a question whether he would last long enough to reach the firearm. There was a bright patch of red in either liver-coloured cheek; his lips were working convulsively. And Steinmetz saw him in time. He seized him by the collar of his coat and dragged him back. He

placed his foot on the little pistol and faced De Chauxville with glaring eyes. De Chauxville rose to his feet, and for a moment the two men looked into each other's souls. The Frenchman's face was twisted with pain. No word was said.

Such was the last reckoning between Karl Steinmetz and the Baron Claude de Chauxville.

The Frenchman went slowly towards the door. He faltered, and looked round for a chair. He sat heavily down with a little exclamation of pain and exhaustion, and felt for his pocket-handkerchief. The scented cambric diffused a faint dainty odour of violets. He sat forward with his two hands on his knees, swaying a little from side to side. Presently he raised his handkerchief to his face. There were tears in his eyes.

Thus the two men waited until De Chauxville had recovered himself sufficiently to take his departure. The air was full of naked human passions. It was rather a gruesome scene.

At last the Frenchman stood slowly up, and, with characteristic thought of appearances, fingered his torn coat.

'Have you a cloak?' asked Steinmetz.

'No.'

The German went to a cupboard in the wall and selected a long riding-cloak, which he handed to the Frenchman without a word.

Thus Claude de Chauxville walked to the door in a cloak which had figured at many a Charity League meeting. Assuredly the irony of Fate is a keener thing than any poor humour we have at our command. When evil is punished in this present life there is no staying of the hand.

Steinmetz followed De Chauxville through the long passage they had traversed a few minutes earlier and down the broad staircase. The servants were waiting at the door with the horse put at the Frenchman's disposal by Paul.

De Chauxville mounted slowly, heavily, with twitching lips. His face was set and cold now. The pain was getting bearable, the wounded vanity was bleeding inwardly. In his dull eyes there was a gleam of hatred and malice. It was the face of a man rejoicing inwardly over a deep and certain vengeance.

'It is well,' he was muttering between his clenched teeth as he rode away, while Steinmetz watched him from the doorstep. 'It is well. Now I will not spare you.'

He rode down the hill and through the village with the light of the setting sun shining on a face where pain and deadly rage were fighting for the mastery.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A TALE THAT IS TOLD.

KARL STEINMETZ walked slowly upstairs to his own room. The evening sun shining through the small deeply-embraured windows fell on a face at no time joyous, now tired and worn. He sat down at his broad writing-table, and looked round the room with a little blink of the eyelids.

'I am getting too old for this sort of thing,' he said.

His gaze lighted on the heavy riding-whip thrown on the ground near the door where he had released Claude de Chauxville after the terrible punishment meted out to that foe with heavy Teutonic hand. Steinmetz rose, and picking up the whip with the grunt of a stout man stooping, replaced it carefully in the rack over the mantelpiece.

He stood looking out of the window for a few moments.

'It will have to be done,' he said resolutely, and rang the bell.

'My compliments to the Prince,' he said to his servant, who appeared instantly, 'and will he come to me here.'

When Paul came into the room a few minutes later Steinmetz was standing by the fire. He turned and looked gravely at the Prince.

'I have just kicked De Chauxville out of the house,' he said.

The colour left Paul's face quite suddenly.

'Why?' he asked with hard eyes. He had begun to distrust Etta, and there is nothing so hard to stop as the growth of distrust.

Steinmetz did not answer at once.

'Was it not *my* privilege?' asked Paul with a grim smile. There are some smiles more terrible than any frown.

'No,' answered Steinmetz; 'I think not. It is not as bad as that. But it is bad enough, *mein lieber!*—it is bad enough! I horsewhipped him first for myself. *Gott!* how pleasant that was! And then I kicked him out for you.'

'Why?' repeated Paul with a white face.

'It is a long story,' answered Steinmetz without looking at him. 'He knows too much.'

'About whom?'

'About all of us.'

Paul walked away to the window. He stood looking out, his hands thrust into the side-pockets of his jacket, his broad back turned uncompromisingly upon his companion.

'Tell me the story,' he said. 'You need not hurry over it. You need not trouble to—spare me. Only let it be quite complete—once for all.'

Steinmetz winced. He knew the expression of the face that was looking out of the window.

'This man has hated me all his life,' he said. 'It began as such things usually do between men—about a woman. It was years ago. I got the better of him, and the good God got the better of me. She died, and De Chauxville forgot her. I—have not forgotten her. But I have tried to do so. It is a slow process, and I have made very little progress; but all that is my affair and beside the question. I merely mention it to show you that De Chauxville had a grudge against me—'

'This is no time for mistaken charity,' interrupted Paul. 'Do not try to screen anybody. I shall see through it.'

There was a little pause. Never had that silent room been so noiseless.

'In after-life,' Steinmetz went on, 'it was our fate to be at variance several times. Our mutual dislike has had no opportunity of diminishing. It seems that, before you married, De Chauxville was pleased to consider himself in love with Mrs. Sydney Bamborough. Whether he had any right to think himself ill-used I do not know. Such matters are usually known to two persons only, and imperfectly by them. It would appear that the wound to his vanity was serious. It developed into a thirst for revenge. He looked about for some means to do you harm. He communicated with your enemies, and allied himself to such men as Vassili of Paris. He followed us to Petersburg, and then he had a stroke of good fortune. He found out—who betrayed the Charity League!'

Paul turned slowly round. In his eyes there burned a dull, hungering fire. Men have seen such a look in the eyes of a beast of prey, driven, famished, cornered at last, and at last face to face with its foe.

'Ah! He knows that!' he said slowly.

'Yes, God help us! he knows that.'

'And who was it?'

Steinmetz moved uneasily from one foot to the other.

'It was a woman,' he said.

'A woman!'

'A woman—you know,' said Steinmetz slowly.

'Good God! Catrina!'

'No, not Catrina.'

'Then who?' cried Paul hoarsely. His hands fell heavily on the table.

'Your wife.'

Paul knew before the words were spoken.

He turned again, and stood looking out of the window with his hands thrust into his pockets. He stood there for whole minutes in an awful stillness. The clock on the mantelpiece, a little travelling timepiece, ticked in a hurried way, as if anxious to get on. Down beneath them, somewhere in the courtyards of the great castle, a dog—a deep-voiced wolf-hound—was baying persistently and nervously, listening for the echo of its own voice amid the pines of the desert forest.

Steinmetz watched Paul's motionless back with a sort of fascination. He moved uneasily, as if to break a spell of silence almost unbearable in its tensity. He went to the table and sat down. From mere habit he took up a quill pen. He looked at the point of it and at the inkstand. But he had nothing to write. There was nothing to say.

He laid the pen aside, and sat leaning his broad head upon the palm of his hand, his two elbows on the table. Paul never moved. Steinmetz waited. His own life had been no great success. He had had much to bear, and he had borne it. He was wondering heavily whether any of it had been as bad as what Paul was bearing now while he looked out of the window with his hands in his pockets, saying nothing.

At length Paul moved. He turned, and, coming towards the table, laid his hand on Steinmetz's broad shoulder.

'Are you sure of it?' he asked in a voice that did not sound like his own at all—a hollow voice like that of an old man.

'Quite; I have it from Stepán Lanovitch—from the Princess herself.'

They remained thus for a moment. Then Paul withdrew his hand, and walked slowly to the window.

'Tell me,' he said, 'how she did it.'

Steinmetz was playing with the quill pen again. It is singular how at great moments we perform trivial acts, think trivial

thoughts. He dipped the pen in the ink, and made a pattern on the blotting-pad with dots.

'It was an organised plan between husband and wife,' he said. 'Bamborough turned up at Thors and asked for a night's lodging on the strength of a very small acquaintance. He stole the papers from Stepán's study and took them to Tver, where his wife was waiting for them. She took them on to Paris and sold them to Vassili. Bamborough began his journey eastward, knowing presumably that he could not escape by the western frontier, but lost his way on the steppe. You remember the man whom we picked up between here and Tver with his face all cut to pieces?—he had been dragged by the stirrup. That was Sydney Bamborough. The good God had hit back quickly.'

'How long have you known this?' asked Paul in a queer voice.

'I saw it suddenly in the Princess's face, one day in Petersburg—a sort of revelation. I read it there, and she saw me reading. I should have liked to keep it from you, for your sake as well as for hers. Our daily life is made possible only by the fact that we know so little of our neighbours. There are many things of which we are better ignorant right up to the end. This might have been one of them. But De Chauxville found it out, and it is better that I should tell you than he.'

Paul did not look round. The wolf-hound was still barking at its own echo—a favourite pastime of those who make a great local stir in the world.

'Of course,' said Paul after a long pause, 'I have been a great fool. I know that. But——'

He turned and looked at Steinmetz with haggard eyes.

'But I would rather go on being a fool than suspect anyone of a deception like this.'

Steinmetz was still making patterns on the blotting-pad.

'It is difficult for us men,' he said slowly, 'to look at these things from a woman's point of view. They hold a different sense of honour from ours—especially if they are beautiful. And the fault is ours—especially towards the beautiful ones. There may have been temptations of which we are ignorant.'

Paul was still looking at him. Steinmetz looked up slowly, and saw that he had grown ten years older in the last few minutes. He did not look at him for more than a second, because the sight of Paul's face hurt him. But he saw in that moment that Paul

did not understand. This strong man, hard in his youthful strength of limb and purpose, would be just, but nothing more. And between man and man it is not always justice that is required. Between man and woman justice rarely meets the difficulty.

'Comprendre c'est pardonner,' quoted Steinmetz vaguely.

He hesitated to interfere between Paul and his wife. Axioms are made for crucial moments. A man's life has been steered by a proverb before this. Some, who have no religion, steer by them all the voyage.

Paul walked slowly to the chair he usually occupied, opposite to Steinmetz, at the writing-table. He walked and sat down as if he had travelled a long distance.

'What is to be done?' asked Steinmetz.

'I do not know. I do not think that it matters much. What do you recommend?'

'There is so much to be done,' answered Steinmetz, 'that it is difficult to know what to do first. We must not forget that De Chauville is furious. He will do all the harm of which he is capable at once. We must not forget that the country is in a state of smouldering revolt, and that we have two women, two English ladies, entrusted to our care.'

Paul moved uneasily in his chair. His companion had struck the right note. This large man was happiest when he was tiring himself out.

'Yes; but about Etta?' he said.

And the sound of his voice made Steinmetz wince. There is nothing so heartrending as the sight of dumb suffering.

'You must see her,' answered he, reflectively. 'You must see her, of course. She may be able to explain.'

He looked across the table beneath his shaggy grey eyebrows. Paul did not at that moment look a likely subject for explanations, even the explanations of a beautiful woman. But there was one human quantity which, in all his experience, Karl Steinmetz had never successfully gauged--namely, the extent of a woman's power over the man who loves, or, at one time, has loved her.

'She cannot explain away Stepán Lanovitch's ruined life. She can hardly explain away a thousand deaths from unnatural causes every winter in this province alone.'

This was what Steinmetz dreaded--justice.

'Give her the opportunity,' he said.

Paul was looking out of the window. His singularly firm mouth was still and quiet—not a mouth for explanations.

‘I will if you like,’ he said.

‘I do like, Paul. I beg of you to do it. And remember that—she is not a man.’

This, like other appeals of the same nature, fell on stony ground. Paul simply did not understand it. In all the years of his work among the peasants it is possible that some well-spring of conventional charity had been dried up—scorched in the glare of burning injustice. He was not at this moment in a mood to consider the only excuse that Steinmetz seemed to be able to urge.

The sun had set long ago. The short twilight lay over the snow-covered land with a chill hopelessness. Steinmetz looked at his watch. They had been together an hour—one of those hours that count as years in a lifetime. He had to peer into the face of the watch in order to see the hands. The room was almost dark, and no servant ever came to it unless summoned.

Paul was looking down at his companion as if waiting to hear the time. At great moments we are suddenly brought face to face with the limits of human nature. It is at such moments that we find that we are not gods, but only men. We can only feel to a certain extent, only suffer up to a certain point.

‘We must dress for dinner,’ said Steinmetz. ‘Afterwards—well, afterwards we shall see.’

‘Yes,’ answered Paul. And he did not go.

The two men stood looking at each other for a moment. They had passed through much together—danger, excitement, and now they were dabbling in sorrow. It would appear that this same sorrow runs like a river across the road of our life. Some of us find the ford and plash through the shallows—shallows ourselves—while others flounder into deep water. These are they who look right on to the greater events, and fail to note the trivial details of each little step. Paul was wading through the deep water, and this good friend of his was not inclined to stand upon the bank. It is while passing through this river that Fortune sends some of us a friend, who is ever afterwards different from all others.

Paul stood looking down at the broad, heavy face of the man who loved him like a father. It was not easy for him to speak. He seemed to be making an effort.

'I do not want you to think,' he said at last, 'that it is as bad as it might have been. It might have been worse, much worse, had I not made a mistake in regard to my own feelings when I married her. I will try and do the right thing by her. Only, at present there does not seem to be much left, except you.'

Steinmetz looked up with his quaintly resigned smile.

'Ah, yes;' he said, 'I am there always.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

KARL STEINMETZ had shown the depth of his knowledge of men and women when he commented on that power of facing danger with an unruffled countenance which he was pleased to attribute to English ladies above all women. During the evening he had full opportunity of verifying his own observations.

Etta came down to dinner smiling and imperturbable. On the threshold of the drawing-room she exchanged a glance with Karl Steinmetz; and that was all. At dinner it was Maggie and Paul who were silent. Etta talked to Steinmetz—brightly, gaily, with a certain courage of a very high order; for she was desperate, and she did not show it.

At last the evening came to an end. Maggie had sung two songs. Steinmetz had performed on the piano with a marvellous touch. All had played their parts with the brazen faces which Steinmetz in his knowledge of many nations assigned to the Anglo-Saxon race before others.

At last Etta rose to go to bed, with a little sharp sigh of great suspense. It was coming.

She went up to her room, bidding Maggie good-night in the passage. In a mechanical way she allowed the deft-handed maid to array her in a dressing-gown—soft, silken, a dainty triumph in its way. Then, almost impatiently, she sent the maid away when her hair was only half released. She would brush it herself. She was tired. No, she wanted nothing more.

She sat down by the fire, brush in hand. She could hardly breathe. It was coming.

She heard Paul come to his dressing-room. She heard his deep, quiet voice reply to some question of his valet's. Then the

word 'Good-night' in the same quiet voice. The valet had gone. There was only the door now between her and—what? Her fingers were at the throat of her dressing-gown. The soft lace seemed to choke her.

Then Paul knocked at the door. It was coming. She opened her lips, but at first could make no sound.

'Come in,' she said at length, hoarsely.

She wondered whether he would kill her. She wondered whether she was in love with her husband. She had begun wondering that lately; she was wondering it when he came in. He had changed his dress-coat for a silk-faced jacket in which he was in the habit of working with Steinmetz in the quiet room after the household had gone to bed.

She looked up. She dropped the brush, and ran towards him with a great rustle of her flowing silks.

'Oh, Paul, what is it?' she cried.

She stopped short, not daring to touch him, before his cold, set face.

'Have you seen anyone?' she whispered.

'Only De Chauxville,' he answered, 'this afternoon.'

'Indeed, Paul,' she protested hastily, 'it was nothing. A message from Catrina Lanovitch. It was only the usual visit of an acquaintance. It would have been very strange if he had not called. Do you think I could care for a man like that?'

'I never did think so until now,' returned Paul steadily. 'Your excuses accuse you. You may care for him. I do not know; I—do—not—care.'

She turned slowly and went back to her chair. Mechanically she took up the brush and shook back her beautiful hair.

'You mean you do not care for me,' she said. 'Oh, Paul, be careful.'

Paul stood looking at her. He was not a subtle-minded man at all. He was not one of those who take it upon themselves to say that they understand women—using the word in an offensively general sense—as if women were situated midway between the human and the animal races. He was old-fashioned enough to look upon women as higher and purer than men, while equally capable of thought and self-control. He had, it must be remembered, no great taste for fictional literature. He had not read the voluminous lucubrations of the modern woman-writer. He had not assisted at the nauseating spectacle of a woman

morally turning herself inside out in three volumes and an interview.

No—this man respected women still; and he paid them an honour which, thank Heaven! most of them still deserve. He treated them as men in the sense that he considered them to be under the same code of right and wrong, of good and evil.

He did not understand what Etta meant when she told him to be careful. He did not know that the modern social code is like the Spanish grammar—there are so many exceptions that the rules are hardly worth noting. And one of our most notorious modern exceptions is the married woman who is pleased to hold herself excused because outsiders tell her that her husband does not understand her.

‘I do not think,’ said Paul judicially, ‘that you can have cared very much whether I loved you or not. When you married me you knew that I was the promoter of the Charity League; I almost told you. I told you so much that with your knowledge you must have been aware of the fact that I was heavily interested in the undertaking which you betrayed. You married me without certain proof of your husband’s death, such was your indecent haste to call yourself a princess. And now I find, on your own confession, that you have a clandestine understanding with a man who tried to murder me only a week ago. Is it not rather absurd to talk of caring?’

He stood looking down at her—cold and terrible in the white heat of his suppressed Northern anger.

The little clock on the mantelpiece, in a terrible hurry, ticked with all its might. Time was speeding. Every moment was against her. And she could think of nothing to say, simply because those things that she would have said to others would carry no weight with this man.

Etta was leaning forward in the luxurious chair, staring with haggard eyes into the fire. The flames leapt up and gleamed on her pale face, in her deep eyes.

‘I suppose,’ she said, without looking at him, ‘that you will not believe me when I tell you that I hate the man. I knew nothing of what you refer to as happening last week—his attempt to murder you, I mean. You are a prince, and all-powerful in your own province. Can you not throw him into prison and keep him there? Such things are done in Russia. He is more dangerous than you think. Please do it—please——’

Paul looked at her with hard, unresponsive eyes. Lives depended on his answer.

'I did not come here to discuss Claude de Chauxville,' he said, 'but you, and our future.'

Etta drew herself up as one under the lash, and waited with set teeth.

'I propose,' he said, in a final voice which made it no proposition at all, 'that you go home to England at once with—your cousin. This country is not safe for you. The house in London will be at your disposal. I will make a suitable settlement on you, sufficient to live in accordance with your title and position. I must ask you to remember that the name you bear has hitherto been an unsullied one. We have been proud of our princesses—up to now. In case of any trouble reaching you from outside sources connected with this country I should like you to remember that you are under my protection and that of Steinmetz. Either of us will be glad at any time to consider any appeal for assistance that you may think fit to make. You will always be the Princess Howard-Alexis.'

Etta gave a sudden laugh.

'Oh, yes,' she said, and her face was strangely red, 'I shall still be the Princess Alexis.'

'With sufficient money to keep up the position,' he went on, with the cruel irony of a slow-spoken man.

A queer twisted smile passed across Etta's face—the smile of one who is in agony and will not shriek.

'There are certain stipulations which I must make in self-defence,' went on Paul. 'I must ask you to cease all communication of whatsoever nature with the Baron de Chauxville. I am not jealous of him—now. I do not know why.'

He paused, as if wondering what the meaning of this might be. Etta knew it. The knowledge was part of her punishment.

'But,' continued her husband, 'I am not going to sacrifice the name my mother bore to the vanity of a French coxcomb. You will be kind enough to avoid all society where it is likely that you should meet him. If you disregard my desires in this matter I shall be compelled to take means to enforce them.'

'What means?'

'I shall reduce your allowance.'

Their eyes met, and perhaps that was the bitterest moment in Etta's life. Dead things are better put out of sight at once.

Etta felt that Paul's dead love would grin at her in every sovereign of the allowance which was to be hers. She would never get away from it, she could never shake off its memory.

'Am I to live alone?' asked Etta, suddenly finding her voice.

'That is as you like,' answered Paul, perhaps purposely misunderstanding her. 'You are at liberty to have any friends or companion you wish. Perhaps—your cousin.'

'Maggie?'

'Yes,' answered Paul. For the first time since he had entered the room his eyes were averted from Etta's face.

'She would not live with me,' said the Princess curtly.

Paul seemed to be reflecting. When he next spoke it was in a kinder voice.

'You need not tell the circumstances which have given rise to this—arrangement.'

Etta shrugged her shoulders.

'That,' went on Paul, 'rests entirely with yourself. You may be sure that I will tell no one. I am not likely to discuss it with anyone whosoever.'

Etta's stony eyes softened for a moment. She seemed to be alternating between hatred of this man and love of him—a dangerous state for any woman. It is possible that if he had held his hand out to her she would have been at his feet in a wild incoherent passion of self-hatred and abasement. Such moments as these turn our lives and determine them. Paul knew nothing of the issue hanging on this moment, on the passing softness of her eyes. He knew nothing of the danger in which this woman stood, of the temptation with which she was wrestling. He went on in his blindness, went on being only just.

'If,' he said, 'you have any further questions to ask, I shall always be at your service. For the next few days I shall be busy. The peasants are in a state of discontent verging on rebellion. We cannot at present arrange for your journey to Tver, but as soon as it is possible I will tell you.'

He looked at the clock, and made an imperceptible movement towards the door.

Etta glanced up sharply. She did not seem to be breathing.

'Is that all?' she asked in a dull voice.

There was a long silence, tense and throbbing, the great silence of the steppe.

'I think so,' answered Paul at length. 'I have tried to be just.'

'Then justice is very cruel.'

'Not so cruel as the woman who for a few pounds sells the happiness of thousands of human beings. Steinmetz advised me to speak to you. He suggested the possibility of circumstances of which we are ignorant. He said that you might be able to explain.'

Silence.

'Can you explain?'

Silence. Etta sat looking into the fire. The little clock hurried on. At length Etta drew a deep breath.

'You are the sort of man,' she said, 'who does not understand temptation. You are strong. The devil leaves the strong in peace. You have found virtue easy because you have never wanted money. Your position has always been assured. Your name alone is a password through the world. Your sort are always hard on women who—who—— What have I done, after all?'

Some instinct bade her rise to her feet and stand before him, tall, beautiful, passionate, a woman in a thousand, a fit mate for such as he. Her beautiful hair in burnished glory round her face gleamed in the firelight. Her white fingers clenched, her arms thrown back, her breast panting beneath the lace, her proud face looking defiance into his—no one but a prince could have braved this princess.

'What have I done?' she cried a second time. 'I have only fought for myself, and if I have won, so much the greater credit. I am your wife. I have done nothing the law can touch. Thousands of women moving in our circle are not half so good as I am. I swear before God I am——'

'Hush!' he said, with upraised hand. 'I never doubted that.'

'I will do anything you wish,' she went on—and in her humility she was very dangerous. 'I deceived you, I know. But I sold the Charity League before I knew that you—that you thought of me. When I married you I didn't love you. I admit that. But Paul, oh, Paul! if you were not so good you would understand.'

Perhaps he did understand; for there was that in her eyes that made her meaning clear.

He was silent, standing before her in his great strength, his marvellous and cruel self-restraint.

'You will not forgive me?'

For a moment she leant forward, peering into his face. He seemed to be reflecting.

'Yes,' he said at length, 'I forgive you. But if I cared for you forgiveness would be impossible.'

He went slowly towards the door. Etta looked round the room with drawn eyes; their room—the room he had fitted up for his bride with the lavishness of a great wealth and a great love.

He paused with his hand on the door.

'And,' she said with fiery cheeks, 'does your forgiveness date from to-night.'

'Yes!'

He opened the door.

'Good-night!' he said, and went out.

CHAPTER XL.

STEPAN RETURNS.

AT daybreak the next morning Karl Steinmetz was awakened by the familiar cry of the wolf beneath his window. He rose and dressed hastily. The eastern sky was faintly pink; a rosy twilight moved among the pines. He went downstairs and opened the little door at the back of the castle.

It was, of course, the Starosta, shivering and bleached in the chilly dawn.

'They have watched my cottage, Excellency, all night. It was only now that I could get away. There are two strange sleighs outside Domensky's hut. There are marks of many sleighs that have been and gone. Excellency, it is unsafe for anyone to venture outside the castle to-day. You must send to Tver for the soldiers.'

'The Prince refuses to do that.'

'But why, Excellency? We shall be killed.'

'You do not know the effect of platoon firing on a closely packed mob, Starost. The Prince does,' replied Steinmetz, with his grim smile.

They spoke together in hushed voices for half an hour while the daylight crept up the eastern sky. Then the Starosta stole away among the still larches, like the wolf whose cry he imitated so perfectly.

Steinmetz closed the door and went upstairs to his own room, his face grave and thoughtful, his tread heavy with the weight of anxiety.

The day passed as such days do. Etta was not the woman to plead a conventional headache and remain hidden. She came down to breakfast, and during that meal was boldly conversational.

'She has spirit,' reflected Karl Steinmetz behind his quiet grey eyes. He admired her for it, and helped her. He threw back the ball of conversation with imperturbable good-humour.

They were completely shut in. No news from the outer world penetrated to the little party besieged within their own stone walls. Maggie, fearless and innocent, announced her intention of snow-shoeing, but was dissuaded therefrom by Steinmetz with covert warnings.

During the morning each was occupied in individual affairs. At luncheon-time they met again. Etta was now almost defiant. She was on her mettle. She was so near to loving Paul that a hatred of him welled up within her breast whenever he repelled her advances with uncompromising reticence.

They did not know—perhaps she hardly knew herself—that the opening of the side-door depended upon her humour.

In the afternoon Etta and Maggie sat, as was their wont, in the morning-room looking out over the cliff. Of late their intercourse had been slightly strained. They had never had much in common, although circumstances had thrown their lives together.

It is one of the ills to which women are heir that they have frequently to pass their whole lives in the society of persons with whom they have no real sympathy. Both these women were conscious of the little rift within the lute, but such rifts are better treated with silence. That which comes to interfere with a woman's friendship will not often bear discussion.

At dusk Steinmetz went out. He had an appointment with the Starosta.

Paul was sitting in his own room, making a pretence of work, about five o'clock when Steinmetz came hurriedly to him.

'A new development,' he said shortly. 'Come to my room.'

Paul rose and followed him through the double doorway built in the thickness of the wall.

Steinmetz's large room was lighted only by a lamp standing

on the table. All the light was thrown on the desk by a large green shade, leaving the rest of the room in a semi-darkness.

At the far end of the room a man was standing in an expectant attitude. There was something furtive about this intruder, and at the same time familiar to Paul, who peered at him through the gloom.

Then the man came hurriedly forward.

'Ah, Pavlo, Pavlo!' he said in a deep, hollow voice. 'I could not expect you to know me.'

He threw his arms around him, and embraced him after the simple manner of Russia. Then he held him at arms' length.

'Stepán!' said Paul. 'No, I did not know you.'

Stepán Lanovitch was still holding him at arms' length, examining him with the large faint blue eyes which so often go with an exaggerated philanthropy.

'Old,' he muttered, 'old. Ah, my poor Pavlo. I heard in Kiew—you know how we outlaws hear such things—that you were in trouble, so I came to you.'

Steinmetz in the background raised his patient eyebrows.

'There are two men in the world,' went on the voluble Lanovitch, 'who can manage the moujiks of Tver—you and I; so I came. I will help you, Pavlo; I will stand by you. Together we can assuredly quell this revolt.'

Paul nodded, and allowed himself to be embraced a second time. He had long known Stepán Lanovitch of Thors as one of the many who go about the world doing good with their eyes shut. For the moment he had absolutely no use for this well-meaning blunderer.

'I am afraid,' he said, 'that it has got beyond control. We cannot stamp it out now except by force, and I would rather not do that. Our only hope is that it may burn itself out. The talkers must get hoarse in time.'

Lanovitch shook his head.

'They have been talking since the days of Ananias,' he said, 'and they are not hoarse yet. I fear, Pavlo, there will never be peace in the world until the talkers are hoarse.'

'How did you get here?' asked Paul, who was always businesslike.

'I brought a pack on my back and sold cotton. I made myself known to the Starosta, and he communicated with good Karl here.'

'Did you learn anything in the village?' asked Paul.

'No; they suspected me. They would not talk. But I understand them, Pavlo, these poor simple fools. A pebble in the stream would turn the current of their convictions. Tell them who is the Moscow Doctor. It is your only chance.'

Steinmetz grunted acquiescence and walked wearily to the window. This was only an old and futile argument of his own.

'And make it impossible for me to live another day among them,' said Paul. 'Do you think St. Petersburg would countenance a prince who works among his moujiks?'

Stepán Lanovitch's pale blue eyes looked troubled. Steinmetz shrugged his shoulders.

'They have brought it on themselves,' he said.

'As much as a lamb brings the knife upon itself by growing up,' replied Paul.

Lanovitch shook his white head with a tolerant little smile. He loved these poor helpless peasants with a love as large as and a thousand times less practical than Paul's.

In the meantime Paul was thinking in his clear, direct way. It was this man's habit in life and in thought to walk straight past the side issues.

'It is like you, Stepán,' he said at length, 'to come to us at this time. We feel it, and we recognise the generosity of it, for Steinmetz and I know the danger you are running in coming back to this country. But we cannot let you do it—No, do not protest. It is quite out of the question. We might quell the revolt; no doubt we should—the two of us together. But what would happen afterwards? You would be sent back to Siberia, and I should probably follow you for harbouring an escaped convict.'

The face of the impulsive philanthropist dropped pathetically. He had come to his friend's assistance on the spur of the moment. He was destined, as some men are, to plunge about the world seeking to do good. And it has been decreed that good must be done by stealth and after deliberation only. He who does good on the spur of the moment usually sows a seed of dissension in the trench of time.

'Also,' went on Paul, with that deliberate grasp of the situation which never failed to astonish the ready-witted Steinmetz—'also, you have other calls upon your energy. You have other work to do.'

Lanovitch's broad face lightened up; his benevolent brow beamed. His capacity for work had brought him to the shoemaker's last in Tomsk. It is a vice that grows with indulgence.

'It has pleased the Authorities,' went on Paul, who was shy of religious turns of phrase, 'to give us all our own troubles. Mine—such as they are, Stepán—must be managed by myself. Yours can be faced by no one but you. You have come at the right moment. You do not quite realise what your coming means to Catrina.'

'Catrina! Ah!'

The weak blue eyes looked into the strong face and read nothing there.

'I doubt,' said Paul, 'whether it is right for you to continue sacrificing Catrina for the sake of the little good that you are able to do. You are hampered in your good work to such an extent that the result is very small, while the pain you give is very great.'

'But is that so, Pavlo? Is my child unhappy?'

'I fear so,' replied Paul gravely, with his baffling self-restraint. 'She has not much in common with her mother, you understand.'

'Ah, yes.'

'It is you to whom she is attached. Sometimes it is so with children and parents. One cannot tell why.'

Steinmetz looked as if he could supply information upon the subject; but he remained silent, standing, as it were, in an acquiescent attitude.

'You have fought your fight,' said Paul. 'A good fight, too. You have struck your blow for the country. You have sown your seed, but the harvest is not yet. Now it is time to think of your own safety, of the happiness of your own child.'

Stepán Lanovitch turned away and sat heavily down. He leant his two arms on the table and his chin upon his clenched hands.

'Why not leave the country now; at all events for a few years?' went on Paul; and when a man who is accustomed to command stoops to persuade, it is strong persuasion that he wields. 'You can take Catrina with you. You will be assuring her happiness, which, at all events, is something tangible—a present harvest! I will drive over to Thors now and bring her back. You can leave to-night and go to America.'

Stepán Lanovitch raised his head and looked hard into Paul's face.

'You wish it?'

'I think,' answered Paul steadily, 'that it is for Catrina's happiness.'

Then Lanovitch rose up and took Paul's hand in his work-stained grip.

'Go, my son. It will be a great happiness to me. I will wait here,' he said.

Paul went straight to the door. He was a man with a capacity for prompt action, which seemed to rise to demand. Steinmetz followed him out into the passage and took him by the arm.

'You cannot do it,' he said.

'Yes, I can,' replied Paul. 'I can find my way through the forest. No one will venture to follow me there in the dark.'

Steinmetz hesitated, shrugged his shoulders, and went back into the room.

The ladies at Thors were dressed for dinner, were, indeed, awaiting the announcement of that meal, when Paul broke in upon their solitude. He did not pause to lay aside his furs, but went into the long low room, withdrawing his seal gloves painfully, for it was freezing as it only can freeze in March.

The Countess assailed him with many questions, more or less sensible, which he endured patiently until the servant had left the room. Catrina, with flushed cheeks, stood looking at him, but said nothing.

Paul withdrew his gloves and submitted to the Countess's futile tugs at his fur coat. Then Catrina spoke.

'The Comte de Chauxville has left us,' she said, without knowing exactly why.

For the moment Paul had forgotten Claude de Chauxville's existence.

'I have news for you,' he said; and he gently pushed the chattering Countess aside. 'Stepán Lanovitch is at Osterno. He arrived to-night.'

'Ah, they have set him free, poor man! Does he wear chains on his ankles—is his hair long? My poor Stepán! Ah, but what a stupid man!'

The Countess collapsed into a soft chair. She chose a soft one obviously. It has to be recorded here that she did not receive the news with unmitigated joy.

'When he was in Siberia,' she gasped, 'one knew at all events where he was; and now, *mon Dieu!* what an anxiety!'

'I have come over to see whether you will join him to-night and go with him to America,' said Paul, looking at her.

'To—America—to-night! My dear Paul, are you mad? One cannot do such things as that. America! that is across the sea.'

'Yes,' answered Paul.

'And I am such a bad sailor. Now, if it had been Paris——'

'But it cannot be,' interrupted Paul. 'Will you join your father to-night?' he added, turning to Catrina.

The girl was looking at him with something in her eyes that he did not care to meet.

'And go to America?' she asked in a lifeless voice.

Paul nodded.

Catrina turned suddenly away from him and walked to the fire, where she stood with her back towards him—a small uncouth figure in black and green, the lamplight gleaming on her wonderful hair. She turned suddenly again, and, coming back, stood looking into his face.

'I will go,' she said. 'You think it best?'

'Yes,' he answered; 'I think it best.'

She drew a sharp breath, and was about to speak, when the Countess interrupted her.

'What!' she cried. 'You are going away to-night like this, without any luggage? And pray what is to become of me?'

'You can join them in America,' said Paul in his quietest tone. 'Or you can live in Paris, at last.'

(To be continued.)

THE
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*CLEG KELLY, ARAB OF THE CITY:
HIS PROGRESS AND ADVENTURES.*¹

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ADVENTURE XXXVIII.

OF MISS BRIGGS AND HER TEN CATS.

'Now then, do you like it?' asked this frank young person. But Hugh Boy was silent as to what he thought of his first knowledgeable kiss. Not that it mattered, for the gay little lady rattled on regardless. 'And what is your name, little boy? You are very ragged, and you have come a long way. But you are clean, and Aunt Robina can't scold me, for she tells me to be kind to the poor, especially when they are quite clean.'

Boy Hugh bashfully answered that his name was Hugh Kavannah. 'And a very nice name it is, nice little boy!' the maid rattled on, heeding him but little, but loving the sound of her own twitter.

The children went over the moor together, till it began to feather into sparse birch-woods and thicker copses towards the plain. Sometimes as they went the little girl's hair whipped Boy Hugh's brow. He had forgotten all about Vara and the baby.

'Do they make you say your prayers in the morning as well as at night?' she asked; 'they do me—such a bother! Aunt Robina, she said last week, that it was self-denial week, and we must give up something for the Lord. So I said I did not mind giving up

saying my prayers in the morning. "Oh but," said cousin Jimmy, "you must give up something you *like* doing." Horrid little boy, Jimmy, always blowing his nose—you don't, well, I don't believe you have a handkerchief—and Aunt Robina, she says, "Well, and what do you think God would say if you gave up saying your prayers?" "God *has* said already," I told her. "What has God said?" she wanted to know, making a face like this—. So I told her that God said, "Pray don't mention it, Miss Briggs." My name is Miss Briggs, you know. I have ten cats. Their names are Tom and Jim, and Harry and Dick, and Bob and Ben and Peter. But Peter's an awful thief.'

She paused for breath and shook her head at the same time. Hugh Boy listened with the open mouth of unbounded astonishment.

'Yes, indeed,' said Miss Briggs, 'and I fear he will come to a bad end. I've thrown him into the mill-dam three times already, like Jonah out of the ship of Tarshish. Aunt Robina says I may play Bible stories on Sundays, you know. So I play Jonah. But he always gets out again. Next time I'm going to sit squash on him till he's dead. Once I sat on a nestful of eggs because I wanted some dear wee fluffy chickens—but I need not tell you about that. I got whipped, but Aunt Robina had to buy me a new pair of—oh, I forgot, I was telling you about wicked Peter. Peter is not a house-cat like the rest, you see. He is a bad, wicked cat. He lives in the barn or in the coach house and eats the pigeons. And he lies on the cows' backs on cold nights. But in the daytime Peter sleeps on the roof of the outhouses, and when any one of the other cats gets anything nice to eat, Peter comes down on them like a shot—'

'Oh aye!' cried Boy Hugh, excited to hear about something he understood, 'I hae seen them do like that. Then there's a graund fecht, lying on their backs and tearing at ane anither wi' their claws, and spittin' and rowin' ower yin anither like a ba'—'

'My cats are not horrid creatures like that!' said Miss Briggs, in a dignified manner, 'as soon as ever they see Peter coming they take to their heels and—oh, you should just see them run for the kitchen door! And their tails are just like the fox's brush that Aunt Robina dusts the pictures with. And then in a minute after you can see wicked Peter sitting on the rigging of the barn eating my poor darling house-cat's nice breakfast.'

'Three cheers for Peter!' cried Hugh, who did not know any better than to express his real sentiments to a lady.

Miss Briggs instantly withdrew her hand from his. Her nose turned up very much, till its expression of scorn became almost an aspiration.

'I am afraid you are not such a nice little boy after all,' she said, severely.

As they went on together the children came to the very edge of the moorland. They ascended a few steps to a place where there were many tumbled crags and cunning hiding-places. From the edge of these they looked down upon a plain of tree tops, in the midst of which peeped out the front of a considerable mansion. The lower windows and the door were hidden in a green haze of beech leaves.

'That is where I live, little boy,' said Miss Briggs, grandly. 'The propriety will belong to me some day. And then I shall send Peter away for good.'

Miss Briggs looked down on the house and gardens with the eye of the possessor of a 'propriety.'

'Tissy, wissy—tissy—wissy!' she cried, suddenly forgetting her dignity.

There was a stirring here and there among the trees. And lo! from off the roofs of the barn and the byre, out of the triangular wickets, from off round-topped corn-stacks and out of different doors in the dwelling-house, there sprang a host of cats. 'See them,' said Miss Briggs, impressively, 'every one of them comes to meet me. That's Peter, wicked Peter,' she said, pointing to a large brindled pussy which led the field by half-a-dozen lengths. Over the bridge they came, all mewing their best, and all arching their tails.

'Their ten tails over their ten backs!' said Miss Briggs, as if she found much spiritual comfort in the phrase.

The cats rubbed themselves against her. Some of them leaped upon her shoulder and sat there, purring loudly. Hugh Boy was unspeakably delighted.

'I wish Vara could see,' he said, remembering for the first time his sister and Gavin.

A harsh voice broke in upon them.

'Elizabeth Briggs! Elizabeth Briggs! What is all this play-acting? And what gangrel loon is this that ye are bringing to the door by the hand? Is there not enough wastry and ruination

about the house of Rascarrel already, without your wiling hame every gypsy's brat and prowling sorrow of a gutter-bluid? Think shame o' yoursel', Elizabeth Briggs!

Hugh Boy dropped the hand which held his. He would not bring disgrace on the friend who had helped him.

'Aunt Robina, you forget yourself,' interposed the young lady with prim dignity, 'and you forget "what sayeth the Scripture."'

She took Boy Hugh's hand again, and held it tighter. 'Forget the Scripture,' cried a tall dark-browed woman who came limping out from a seat under a weeping elm. She was leaning heavily with both hands upon a staff, which she rattled angrily on the ground as she spoke.

'Yes,' said Miss Briggs, 'Do you not know that I am Pharaoh's daughter, and this is little Moses that I drew out of the water?'

'Hold your tongue, Elizabeth Briggs, and come here instantly!' said the dark woman, tapping the ground again with her staff.

Hugh Boy knew the tone. He had heard something like this before.

'Is that your "awfu' woman"?' he said aloud, pointing with his finger at the woman leaning upon the stick.

'Elizabeth Briggs,' she commanded again, pointing at the little girl with her stick, 'Come in to your lesson this minute. And you, whatever you may call yourself, take yourself off at once or I'll get the police to you!'

'Yes, do go away, nice little boy,' said Miss Briggs; 'but when you grow big, come back to the house of Rascarrel and Miss Briggs will marry you. And I will give you another kiss at the garden stile—and so will Peter!' she added. For she felt that some extra kindness and attention was due from her, to make up for the most unscriptural hardheartedness of her Aunt Robina.

So the children took their way together to the garden stile, and as they went out of sight, Boy Hugh turned round to the dark-browed woman:

'My name is Boy Hugh,' he said, 'but I'm not a beggar, awfu' woman!'

The children went slowly and sorrowfully along a gravel walk thickly overgrown with chickweed and moss. Their feet made no sound upon it. On either side box borders rose nearly three feet high, straggling untended over the walks. Still further over were territories of gooseberry bushes, senile and wellnigh barren, their thin-leaved, thorny branches trailing on the ground and crawling

over each other. Beyond these again was a great beech hedge rising up into the sky. Boy Hugh looked at the dark Irish yews standing erect at the corner of every plot. He thought they were like the sentinels at the gate of Holyrood, at whom he used to look as often as he could slip away from the Tinklers' Lands.

Then all suddenly and unexpectedly he began to cry. Miss Briggs stopped aghast. She was, like all womenfolk, well accustomed to her own sex's tears. But a male creature's emotion took her by surprise.

'What is the matter?' she said; 'tell me instantly, nice little boy.'

'This maun be heaven, after a', said he, 'an' your awfu' woman winna let Boy Hugh bide.'

Presently they came out upon a circular opening where the bounding beech edge bent into a circle, and the gloomy yew tree sentinels stood wider about. Overhead the crisp leafage of the beeches clashed and rustled.

Here was a great garden seat of stone, and there at the back rose a fountain with stone nymphs—a fountain long since dry and overgrown with green moss. It seemed to Boy Hugh as if they could never get out of this vast enclosure.

There was also a little stone building at the end down the vista of the gravel walk. Its door stood open and Boy Hugh looked within. It was empty like a church. The floor was made of unpainted wood in squares and crosses. There were painted pictures on the walls, and a shining thing with candles standing upon it at the far end. Behind this the sun shone through a window of red, and yellow, and blue.

'Is that God?' said Hugh Boy, after gazing a long time at the glory of the shining crimson and violet panes and the shining gold upon the altar.

But Miss Briggs dragged him away without making him any answer.

Presently they came to half-a-dozen steps in an angle, which led over the outer wall. They had slipped under a mysterious archway of leaves and so through the beech hedge in order to reach this ladder of stone.

'Good-bye!' said Miss Briggs; 'remember—come back, nice little boy, as soon as you are growed up, and I will marry you. And then we will send Aunt Robina to the poorhouse. Kiss me, nice boy—and now kiss Peter.'

With that Miss Briggs disappeared, running as hard as ever she could, so that she would not need to cry within sight.

But as soon as she got to the great circle of the beeches and yews, she burst out sobbing. 'He was the very nicest boy—the nicest boy. But of course there could be nothing in it. For he is only a mere child, you know!'

But Boy Hugh walked stolidly up the steps, and so out of Paradise. 'I am very hungry!' he said.

ADVENTURE XXXIX.

THE ADVENTURE OF SNAP'S PORRIDGE.

BUT he found Providence just over the wall. For there sat Vara and there was the great stone behind which they had spent the night. All his wanderings had just brought him back to where he had started from. But for all that he was exceedingly glad to see Vara.

He called her, standing still on the top of the wall. She started up as if she had heard a voice from the grave. And the face which she turned to him was colourless like chalk.

'Wi' Vara,' said Hugh, 'what's wrang? Your face looks terrible clean?'

'O, Boy Hugh—Boy Hugh,' she cried, bursting into relieving tears, 'it's you. What a night you have given me!'

But not a word of reproach came from the lips of Vara Kavanah. She had, indeed, enough to do to keep the babe quiet. For having run hither and thither over the moor looking for her brother, she had not had time to seek for any farmhouse where she could get some milk for Gavin's bottle.

In a little, however, they were again walking hand in hand, and Boy Hugh was pouring out all the story of his adventures in the Paradise of the House of Rascarrel.

Chiefly he dwelt upon the divine beauty and abounding merits of Miss Briggs.

'Dinna you think she was an angel frae heeven?' said Boy Hugh.

'I think she was a nasty, wicked, enticing little monkey!' burst out Vara. For though it is part of womanhood's privilege to put up with the truantry of mankind without complaint,

it is too much to expect her to suffer gladly his praises of the Canaanitish women he may have colloqued with upon his travels.

And then Vara walked a long way silent and with her head in the air. Hugh Boy kicked all the stones out of his path and was silent also.

Nevertheless, though in this sulky silence, they travelled steadily on and on. Horizon after horizon broke up, spread out to either side, streamed dispersedly past them, and recomposed itself again solidly behind them.

'I'm awesome hungry!' at last said Boy Hugh, humbly. Vara became full of compassion in a minute.

'And Vara has nothing to give ye!' she said; 'poor Boy Hugh!' The baby woke with a faint cry.

They had passed off the moor and were now come among inhabited houses again. They were just passing a little cottage which stood with its end to the road, as a little boy came out of the gate with a great bowl of porridge and milk in his hand.

'Snap! Snap!' he cried, and looked up and down the road. A small terrier pricked its ears briskly over a wall and then leaped down upon the road. 'Here, Snap!' cried the boy.

Snap came slowly walking down the dusty highway. He smelled at the dish of porridge and milk. Then he sniffed loudly upon the nose of contempt. For he had just been dining richly in the outhouse on a rat which he had killed himself.

Vara's eyes blazed at the sight of the porridge and milk.

'O, gie that to the baby!' she cried, her eyes fairly sparkling fire. 'Gie that to wee Gavin. The dog doesna want it!'

The little boy ran back into the house, crying out at the top of his voice, 'O, mither, mither, here's a lassie wants to gie our Snap's porridge to a babby!'

A kindly-faced, apple-cheeked country woman came to the door of the cottage. She had been baking cakes, and she dusted the oatmeal off her hands as she stood there.

'Can I get the dog's porridge for the bairns? He doesna want them. 'Deed he doesna!' cried Vara, beseechingly.

'Of course, lassie, ye can hae the porridge, and welcome!' said the woman, doubtfully.

'O, thank ye, mem, thank ye!' cried Vara, pouncing instantly on the porridge, lest the permission should be withdrawn. In a minute she had put most of the milk into the babe's bottle and the rest into the hands of Boy Hugh, who fell upon the porridge

unceremoniously with his fingers. Vara smiled as she looked. She was hungrier than either—but happy.

The woman stood watching the wolfish eagerness of the younger children at the sight of food with a strange look on her face. Her lip tightened and her eyes grew sterner. Suddenly Vara glanced up at her with frank blue Irish eyes, brightened by hunger and suffering. They looked through and through the woman at the door.

‘Mither,’ said the boy, ‘they’re eatin’ up a’ our Snap’s porridge, and there will no be a drap left——’

The woman turned on him with a kind of gladness.

‘Hold your tongue!’ she said, with quite unnecessary vehemence. And she slapped her son smartly for no particular reason. The tears were running down her cheeks. She almost dragged the children into the house. Then and there she spread such a breakfast for them as Vara had been seeing in her dreams ever since she grew hungry. It seemed that Gavin grew visibly plumper before her very eyes, with the milk which he absorbed as a sponge takes up water. And there appeared to be no finality to Boy Hugh’s appetite. He could always find room for just another scone, spread with fresh butter and overlaid with cool apple-jelly such as Vara had never in her life partaken of.

Vara herself was almost too happy to eat. But the kind woman pressed her and would not let her leave the table.

‘But I have naething to pay ye wi’!’ said Vara, whose soul was great.

‘Hoot, hear to the lassie! I wadna tak’ pay frae the Queen if she caaed in aff the road to drink a dish of tea. My man’s the Netherby carrier. But tell me what’s brocht ye here, wi’ sic a bairn?’

And Vara told her as much as was necessary.

‘To Liverpool to find your faither,’ said the woman. ‘Ye dinna stir a fit till the morrow’s morn, and then ye can get a ride wi’ our John as far as Netherby, at ony rate.’

Vara was more than grateful to her. She was the first person who had taken their quest seriously. So the carrier’s wife kept them till night, and helped Vara to give the baby and Hugh a bath. Then she made Vara strip herself, and shut the door upon her till the girl had enjoyed such a tubful of warm water as she had never washed in before. As Vara was finishing and rubbing her slender, wearied body and blistered feet with a soft towel, the carrier’s

wife opened the door. 'Put on these!' she said; 'they were my wee Gracie's, and I canna bear to keep them in the house.' Vara would have protested, but the woman shut the door with a slam.

When Vara came out, Gavin was sitting on the carrier's knees and plucking at his beard. For 'our John' had come in and heard their story. He was a wise carrier, and knew better than to attempt to interfere with his wife's benevolences. Then what was Vara's astonishment to find the babe also clad in a new frock, and giving rustling evidence of fresh underclothing. She could hear Boy Hugh's voice outside. He and Snap's master had made up the peace, and were now out somewhere about the barn, encouraging Snap to possess himself of another dinner of rat.

The woman's wonderful kindness went to Vara's heart.

'Ye shouldna, oh, ye shouldna!' she said, and bowing her head in her hands, she wept as she had never done in the worst of all her sufferings.

'Hoot! can ye no haud your tongue, lassie?' said the carrier's wife. 'So mony bairn's things were just a cumber and a thocht to me in this hoose. Our youngest (Tam there) is ten, an' we hae dune wi' that kind o' nonsense in this hoose. What are ye lauchin' at, guidman?' she cried, suddenly turning on the carrier, who had been quaintly screwing up his face.

'I wasna lauchin',' said 'our John,' his face suddenly falling to a quite preternatural gravity.

'They were juist a cumber and a care,' continued the carrier's wife. 'And they are better being o' some use to somebody.'

'Now ye will lie down and sleep in the back room, till the guidman starts on his round at five i' the mornin'.'

So the wearied children were put to bed in the 'back room,' and they fell asleep to the sound of psalm-singing. For the good carrier and his wife were praising the Lord. It is quite a mistake to suppose that most psalm-singers are hypocrites. Much of the good of the world is wrought by those who, being merry of heart, sing psalms.

ADVENTURE XL.

A NEW KIND OF HERO.

THEN with the morning came the new day. The bitterest blast was over for these small pilgrims. The night's rest, the clean clothes, the goodness of the kind carrier folk were new life to Vara. There

was brighter hope in her heart as the carrier's wife set them under the blue hood of the light cart, for her 'man' did not expect any heavy loads that day. The children, therefore, were to ride in the covered waggon. The good woman wept to let them go, and made Vara promise many a time, to be sure and send her a letter. As they went away she slipped half-a-crown into Vara's hand.

'For the baby!' she whispered, like one who makes a shame-faced excuse. And at that moment the carrier pretended to be specially busy about his harness.

But Hugh Boy had quarrelled again with Snap's master, and that enterprising youth sat on the fence opposite and made faces at the party, till his mother, turning round somewhat quickly, caught him in the act.

'Ye ill-set hyule,' said she, 'wait till I get ye!'

But her firstborn did not wait. On the other hand, he betook himself down the meadow with much alacrity. His mother's voice followed him.

'My lad, wait till bedtime. It'll dirl far waur then. "Warm backs, guid bairns!" I'll learn you to make faces ahint my back.'

And as Snap's master went down the meadow, the parts likely to be nocturnally affected began to burn and tingle.

And the thought of the interview she would have with her son in the evening did something to console the carrier's wife for the loss of the children to whom she had taken such a sudden liking.

The light cart went jingling on. The Netherby carrier whistled steadily as he sat on the edge of his driving-board, with his feet on the shaft. Every now and then he passed over a bag of peppermint drops to the children.

'Hae!' he said.

The Netherby carrier was a man of few words, and this was his idea of hospitality. Hugh Boy did not remember ever to have been so happy in his life. Kissing was very well in its way, though Vara had not been pleased when she heard of it. But it was nothing to sitting in a blue-hooded cart and hearing the click and jingle of brass-mounted harness. Now and then the carrier stopped at snug farm-houses, and went in to chaffer with the goodwife for her eggs. Then he left the horse in charge of Hugh Boy, and so completely won that small heart. When the carrier came out again, the farmer's wife mostly came too, and the bargaining and bantering were kept up as the cart receded from the door. Even when the blue-hooded cart was far down the loaning, a

belated and forgetful goodwife would come running to some knowe-top, and from that eminence she would proceed to give further directions for commissions from the town.

'Mind ye buy the thread at Rob Heslop's—no at that upstart sieffer's at the corner, wi' his wax figgurs an' his adverteesements. I dinna haud wi' them ava'!'

For there are still uncouth and outlandish parts of the country, where the medical axiom that it is wicked and unprofessional to advertise holds good in practical commerce. Now the road toward England does not run directly through Netherby, but leaves the town a little to one side with its many spires and its warring denominations. From the outside Netherby looks like a home of ancient peace. But for all that, there were hardly two neighbour shopkeepers down all its long main street who belonged to the same religious denomination—the only exceptions being Dickson the baker and Henderson the butcher. But Henderson and Dickson did not speak to one another, having quarrelled about the singing of paraphrases in the Seceder kirk.

However, the poor benighted Kavannahs did not know one kirk from another. And what is worse, indeed held almost criminal in Netherby, they did not care.

It was here at the parting of the roads that John the carrier took his leave of them. His farewell was not effusive.

'Weel,' he said, cracking his whip three times over, while he thought of the rest of his speech, 'guid-day. Be sure and come back and see us, as the wife bade ye. The sooner the better!'

But he put a shilling into Hugh's hand as they parted.

'For peppermints!' he said.

Vara did not know when she might come to another town on her way, so she decided to buy a loaf in Netherby before going further. For though they never asked for food, except when driven by hunger, as in the case of Snap's dinner, yet since the night on the moor she had resolved to ask for shelter if they came to any house at nightfall. So after the carrier was gone, with many charges Vara left Hugh in care of Gavin and went into the town to make her markets.

Hugh Boy sat a good while by the roadside, till the time began to pass very dully. Then he became interested in the trains which kept shunting and whistling behind him. So he carried Gavin to the side of the railway line, where he could just see the road by which Vara would return. He was quite sure that he could

not be doing any harm. Directly opposite there was a fascinating turn-table, upon which two men stood with iron poles in their hands wheeling round a great engine as if it had been a toy. This was really too much for Boy Hugh. Forgetting all about Vara's warning, he scrambled over the wire paling, and staggered across the netted lines in order to get a nearer view of the marvel.

But just at that moment up came the main line express twenty minutes behind time, and the engine-driver in a bad temper. And if Muckle Alick had not opposed the breadth of his beam to the buffer of Geordie Grierson's engine, this tale, so far at least as two of the Kavannahs were concerned, would have ended here. But when Muckle Alick gripped the children in his great arms, and made that spring to the side, the engine caught him so exactly in the right place that it did no more than considerably accelerate his lateral motion, and project him half-way up the bank. As has been recorded, Muckle Alick's first exclamation (which immediately became proverbial all over the Greenock and South-Eastern) was, 'Is there aught broke, Geordie, think ye?'

They talked of getting up a testimonial to Muckle Alick. But the hero himself strongly discouraged the notion. Indeed, he went so far as to declare that he 'wad gie the fule a ring on the lug that cam' to him wi' only sic a thing!' This was a somewhat unusual attitude for a hero to assume in the circumstances. But it was quite genuine. And so well known was the horse-power of Alick's buffet, that it would have been easier to recruit a storming party in Netherby than a deputation to present a 'token of esteem' to the head porter at Netherby Junction.

In time, however (though this is somewhat to anticipate the tale), there came from the Royal Humane Society a medal, together with a long paper setting forth the noble deed of the saving of the children. No notice of this ever appeared publicly in the local prints, to which such things are usually a godsend.

For Alick immediately put the medal in the bottom of his trunk, beneath his 'best blacks' which he wore only twice a year, at Sacraments.

He had heard that the editor of the 'Netherby Chronicle and Advertiser' had colloqued with the provost of the town to bring about this 'fitting acknowledgment.' Now Muckle Alick could not help the thing itself, but he could help people in Netherby getting to hear about it.

Muckle Alick called upon the editor of the 'Chronicle.' He

found him in, and engaged in the difficult task of penning an editorial which would not alienate the most thin-skinned subscriber, but which would yet be calculated to exasperate the editor of the opposition local paper published in the next county.

'Maister Heron,' said the head-porter, 'I juist looked in to tell ye, that there's nocht to come oot in the "Chronicle" aboot me the morn.'

'But, my dear sir,' said the editor, 'the item has been specially communicated, and is already set up.'

'Then it'll hae to be set doon again!' said Muckle Alick, firmly.

'Impossible, impossible, I do assure you, my dear friend,' remonstrated the editor. He was proprietor—editor and proprietor in one. Such editors in agricultural communities are always polite to subscribers.

'But it's no impossible. It's to be!' said Alick—'Or there's no a paper will leave the junction the morn—aye, and there'll no be a paper sell't in this toon eyther.'

It was not clear to the editor how Muckle Alick could bring about this result.

'But,' said he, tapping the desk with his pen, 'my dear sir, the stationmaster—the railway company—'

'Ow aye, I ken,' said Muckle Alick, 'there wad be a wark aboot it after, nae doot. But it's the morn I'm speakin' aboot, Maister Heron. It is possible I micht get the sack ower the head o' it—(though I'm thinkin' no). But that wadna help your papers to sell the morn.' Alick paused to let this sink well in. Then he took his leave.

'Noo, mind, I'm tellin' ye. Guid day, Yedditur!'

That afternoon Alick presided at a gathering of the amalgamated paper boys of the town, being accredited representatives of all the various newsagents. The proceedings were private, and as soon as strangers were observed, the house was counted out (and stones thrown at them). But the general tenour of the resolutions passed may be gathered from the fact that when Mr. Heron heard of it, he ordered the junior reporter to 'slate a novel' just come in—a novel by an eminent hand. 'It's to make three quarters of a column, less two lines,' he said.

So that we know from this, the length of the suppressed article on the presentation of a medal of the Royal Humane Society to 'our noble and esteemed townsman, Mr. Alexander Douglas.' The 'Netherby Chronicle and Advertiser' enjoyed its

normal circulation next day. And, after Muckle Alick had carefully searched every column of the paper, the parcels were forwarded from the junction with the usual promptitude and despatch.

But this is telling our tale 'withershins about,' as they say in Netherby. We return to Vara and her bairns.

ADVENTURE XLI.

'TWA LADDIES—AND A LASSIE.'

MUCKLE Alick trotted the children soberly down the street, and at the foot he turned his long lumbering stride up a country road. For Alick had a little wife who was an expert market-gardener and beekeeper.

Her name was Mirren, and her size, as reported by her husband, was 'near-aboots as big as twa scrubbers.' It was for her sake and because he could not help himself, that Muckle Alick lived so far from his work.

'D'ye think that because I hae to put up wi' a great hulk like you, comin' hame at nicht smellin' o' cinders and lamp oil, that I'm gaun to leeve in a hut amang the coal waggons? Na, certes, gin ye want to hae Mirren Tereggles to keep ye snug, ye maun e'en walk a mile or twa extra in the day. And it will be the better for keepin' doon that great muckle corporation o' yours!'

And that is the way that Muckle Alick Douglas lived out at Sandyknowes. It was to his small garden-girt house that he took the children.

'What's this ye hae fetched hame in your hand the nicht?' cried the little wife sharply, as she saw her husband come up the loaning. 'It's no ilka wife that wad be pleased to hae a grown family brocht in on her like this!'

'Hoot, Mirren woman!' was all that Muckle Alick said, as he pushed Vara and Hugh in before him, Gavin nestling cosily in his arms the while.

'Whaur gat ye them, Alick?' said Mirren, going forward to look at the bairn in his arms. 'They are bonny weans and no that ill put on.'

Little Gavin was so content in the arms of Muckle Alick that he smiled. And his sweetness of expression struggling through the pinched look of hunger went right to the heart of Mirren, who, having no bairns of her own—'so far,' as Muckle Alick remarked cautiously—had so much the more love for other people's. She

turned on Vara, who stood looking on and smiling also. The little woman was almost fierce.

'What has been done to this bairn that he has never grown?' said Mirren Douglas, wife of Muckle Alick.

Vara flushed in her slow still way, at the imputation that she had not taken good care enough of her Gavin—to pleasure whom she would have given her life.

'I did the best I could,' she said, 'whiles we had to sleep oot a' nicht, an' whiles I had nae milk to gie him.'

'Lassie! lassie!' cried Mirren Douglas, 'what is this ye are tellin' me?'

'The truth,' said Vara Kavannah, quietly; 'Gavin and Boy Hugh and me hae walked a' the road frae Edinburgh. We hae sleepit in the hills, and——'

'But how cam' the bairn here?' asked Muckle Alick's fiercely tender little wife; 'tell me quick!'

'I hae carried Gavin a' the road!' said Vara, simply.

'You, lassie!' cried Mirren, looking at the slip of pale girlhood before her, 'it's juist fair unpossible!'

'But I did carry him. He's no that heavy when ye get the shawl weel set.'

'O lassie, lassie, ye juist mak' me fair shamed,' cried Mistress Douglas. 'Alick, ye muckle bullock; what for are ye standin' there like a cuif? Gang ower to Mistress Fraser's and ask the lend o' her cradle. Thae bairns are gaun to bide——'

'But, wife, hae ye considered?' Alick began.

'Considered, my fit, did ye no hear me? Dinna stand hingin' there, balancin' on your soles like a show elephant lookin' aboot for cookies—gang, will ye!'

The little wife stamped her foot and made a threatening demonstration. Whereupon Muckle Alick betook himself over the way to Mistress Fraser's, and he never smiled till he got past the gate of the front garden, in which Mirren kept her old-fashioned flowers.

'I thoct that's what it wad come to,' said Alick to himself, 'when she saw the bairns. I wonder if she means to keep haud o' them a' thegither? She's been wearing her heart on the floers a lang while, puir lassie. It wad be a farce if three bairns cam' hame at once to Sandyknowes after sae lang withoot ony, twa o' them walkin' cantily on their ain feet!'

Thus Alick mused, laughing a little to himself as he went over to borrow Mistress Fraser's cradle. He had an idea.

'There'll be some amusement at ony rate,' he said, 'but I

maunna be ower keen. Na, and I maun haud back an' make difficulties. And then the wife will tak' the ither side and be juist daft to get her ain way and keep them.'

Alick was well aware of the value of a certain amount of opposition, judiciously distributed.

He arrived before long at the cottage of Mistress Fraser. It was set like his own in the midst of a garden. But instead of being bosomed in flowers, with beeskeps scattered about, the garden was wholly taken up with potatoes, cabbage, and curly greens. It was a strictly utilitarian garden. As soon as Muckle Alick hove in sight, turning up off the main road, a covey of children broke from the door of the house and ran tumultuously towards him. They tripped one another up. They pulled each other back by the hair, or caught those in front by the heels or the coat-tails. It was a clean-limbed, coltish lass of thirteen who gained the race and sprang first into the arms of Muckle Alick. Then two smaller boys gripped each a mighty leg, while a whole horde of smaller banditti swarmed up Alick's rearward works and took his broad back by storm. When he got to the potato garden he looked more like the show elephant his wife had called him than ever. For he was fairly loaded with children 'all along the rigging,' as Mistress Fraser said.

She was a buxom, rosy-cheeked woman, gifted upon occasion with an astonishing plainness of speech.

'Guidnicht to ye, Alick,' she said, 'thae bairns maks as free wi' ye as if they were a' your ain?'

Alick disentangled the hands of one of the rearward harpies from his beard and mouth. Whereupon the offended rascal was not to be appeased. He slid down, caught the giant about the knee, and began to kick an outlying shin with all his might.

'Ye should ken best whether they are or no,' said Alick, 'there's plenty o' them at ony gait!'

'An' what wind has blawn ye awa' frae Sandyknowes this nicht? It taks naething less than an earthquake to shake ye awa' frae Mirren. Ye hae fair forgotten that there's ither folk in the warl.'

'I was wanting the lend o' your cradle, guidwife,' said Alick, with affected shamefacedness, well aware of the astonishment he would occasion by the simple request.

Mistress Fraser had been stooping over a basin in which she was mixing meal and other ingredients, to form the white puddings for which she was famous. She stood up suddenly erect, like a bow straightening itself. Then she looked sternly at Alick.

'Ye are a nice cunning wratch to be an elder—you and Mirren Terregles baith—and at your time o' life. An' hoo is she?'

'Ow, as weel as could hae been expectit,' said Muckle Alick, with just the proper amount of hypocritical resignation demanded by custom on these occasions. Mistress Fraser, whose mind ran naturally on the lines along which Muckle Alick had directed it, was completely taken in.

'An' what has Mirren gotten?—a lassie, I'll wager,' said the excited mother of eleven, dusting her hands of the crumbings of the pudding suet, and then beginning breathlessly to smooth her hair and take off her baking apron. So excited was she that she could not find the loop.

'Aye,' said Alick, quietly, 'there's a lassie!'

'I juiſt kenned it,' said Mistress Fraser, drawing up wisdom from the mysterious wells of her experience; 'muckle men and wee wives aye start aff wi' a lassie—contrarywise they begin wi' a laddie. Noo me and my man——'

What terrible revelation of domestic experience would inevitably have followed, remains unfortunately unknown. For the words which at that moment Muckle Alick delicately let drop, as the chemist drops a rare essence into two ounces of distilled water, brought Mistress Fraser to a dead stop in the fulness of her career after the most intimate domestic reminiscences.

'But there's a laddie come too!' said Muckle Alick, and looked becomingly at the ground.

Mistress Fraser held up her hands.

'Of a' the deceitfu', hidin', unneighbourly craiteurs,' said Mistress Fraser, 'Mirren Terregles is the warst—an' me to hae drank my tea wi' her only last week. I'll wager if I live to hae fifty bairns——'

'The Lord forbid,' said her husband, unexpectedly, from the doorway. 'We hae plenty as it is——'

'And wha's faut's that?' cried his wife over her shoulder. 'Oh the deceitfu' randy——'

'In fact,' said Muckle Alick, dropping another word in, 'there's twa laddies—and a lassie!'

Mistress Fraser sat down quite suddenly.

'Gie me a drink frae the water can, Tam!' she said; 'haste ye fast, Alick's news has gi'en me a turn. Twa laddies and a lassie—I declare it's a Queen's bounty! Preserve me, it's no a cradle ye want, man, but a mill happer! A time or twa like this, and ye'll hae to plant taties in the front yaird—ye will hae to pay

soundly for your ploy at this rate, my man. Three at a whup disna gang wi' cancy-lairies in the cabbage plots, my lad.'

'It's a maist notoriously curious thing,' began Tam Fraser, unexpectedly, 'that I saw Mirren carryin' twa cans o' water this very mornin'——'

Muckle Alick gave him a warning look, which made him catch his next unspoken sentence as a wicket-keeper holds the ball before the field has seen it leave the bat.

'But—but she didna look weel——' added Tam.

'I wad think no, juist,' cried Mistress Fraser, who in an inner room was busy putting a selection of small white things into a covered reticule basket. 'An puir Mirren, she'll no be ready for the like. Wha could be prepared for a hale nation like this—I'll tak' her what I hae. O, the deceitfu' besom—I declare it wad tak' a little to gar me never speak to her again.'

'Dinna do that!' said the hypocritical giant; 'think on her condeetion——'

'Condeetion, condeetion, quo' he—I wonder ye are no black ashamed, Alick Douglas. And nane o' the twa o' ye ever to say a word to me, that's your nearest neebour——'

'I gie ye my word,' said Muckle Alick, 'I kenned nocht aboot it till an hour or twa afore the bairns cam' hame!'

Mistress Fraser turned fiercely upon him.

'Weel, for a' the leers in this pairish—and there are some rousers—ye beat them clean, Alick Douglas—and you an elder amang the Cameronian kirk! Hoo daur ye face your Maker, to say nocht o' the kirk folk as ye stand at the plate on Sabbaths, wi' siccan lees in your mouth?'

'Come awa, man,' she cried from the door in her haste, 'I hae twa bagfu's o' things here. Tam, gang ower by to the Folds and up to Cowdenslack and borrow their twa cradles. They'll no be needing them for a month or twa—I ken that brawly—na, they are straightforrit women, and never spring the like o' this on puir folk to set them a' in a flutter!'

'I think a single cradle wad do. It was a' that Mirren asked for,' said Alick demurely; 'but please yoursel', Mistress Fraser, it is you that kens.'

'Yin,' cried Mistress Fraser, 'the man's gane gyte. Gin ye wull bring a family into the warld by squads o' regiments, ye maun e'en tak' the consequences. Lod, Lod, three cradles a' rockin' at the same time in yae hoose, it will be like a smiddy—or a watchmaker's shop! It'll be fine exerceese for ye, Alick, my

man, when ye come hame at nichts—nae mair planting o' nasty-hurcheons and pollyanthies. But every foot on a cradle rocker, and the lassie's yin to pu' wi' a string. An' serve ye baith richt. O, the deceitfu' madam; wait till I get ower to the Sandyknowes!

And Alick had to take his longest strides to keep pace with the anxious mother of eleven—to whom he had told no lie, though, as he afterwards said, he 'had maybes kept his thumb on some blauds o' the truth.'

'It shows,' said Alick, 'what a differ there is atween the truth and the hale truth—specially when there's a reason annexed in the shape of a woman's imagination, that naturally rins on sic like things.'

But as they neared Sandyknowes it is not to be doubted that Alick grew a little anxious. His position would not be exactly a pleasant one, if, for instance, Mirren should suddenly come out of their little byre with a full luggie of milk. And it was about milking time.

'There doesna appear to be muckle steer about the place, for siccan an awfu' thing to hae happened so lately!' said Mistress Fraser.

'Na,' said the arch-deceiver Alick, making a last effort, 'we are tryin' to keep a' thing as quait as possible.'

'And faith, I dinna wonder. Gin the wives nooadays had ony spunk in them ava', ye wad be mobbed and ridden on the stang, my man!' Then her grievance against Mirren came again upon Mistress Fraser with renewed force, 'O, the randy, the besom,' she cried; 'wait till I get her!'

By this time they were nearing the door of Sandyknowes.

'I dinna think I'll come ben wi' ye the noo. I'll gang ower by the barn instead. There's some things to look to there, I misdoubt,' said Alick.

Just then they heard Mirren's voice raised in a merry laugh. It was really at the tale of Boy Hugh and Miss Briggs, which Vara was telling her.

But the sound brought a scared look to the face of Mistress Fraser.

'She's lauchin', I declare!' she cried; 'that's an awesome bad sign. Guid kens hoo mony there may be by this time——'

And she fairly lifted her voluminous petticoats, and, with her bundles under her arm, ran helter-skelter for the door of Sandyknowes, more like a halfling lassie than a douce mother of eleven bairns.

Muckle Alick saw her fairly in at the kitchen door.

'I think I'll gang ower by to the barn,' he said.

But he had not got more than half-way there when both leaves of the kitchen door sprang open, and out flew Mistress Fraser with the large wooden pot-stick or spurtle in her hand. Alick had admired her performance as she ran towards the house. But it was nothing to the speed with which she now bore down upon him.

'It was like the boat train coming doon by the Stroan, ten minutes ahint time, an' a director on board!' he said afterwards.

At the time Muckle Alick had too many things to think about, to say anything whatever. He ran towards the barn as fast as he could for the choking laughter which convulsed him. And behind him sped the avenger with the uplifted porridge spurtle, crying, 'O ye muckle leein' deevil—ye blackguaird—ye cunnin' hound, let me catch ye——'

And by the cheek of the barn door catch him Mistress Fraser did. And then, immediately after, it was Muckle Alick who received the reward of iniquity. But Mirren stood in the doorway with little Gavin in her arms and Vara and Boy Hugh at either side, and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks in twin parallel rills.

'Gie him his paiks, and soundly, Mistress Fraser; pink him weel. Hit him on the knuckles or on the elbows. Ye micht as weel hit Ben Gairn as try to hurt him by hitting him on the head!'

Alick was speechless with laughter, but Mistress Fraser exclaimed with each resounding stroke, 'Twa laddies and a lassie! O ye vermin!—And me has sent to the Folds and the Cowdenslacks for twa cradles to mak' up the three. Ye hae made a bonny fule o' me. I'll never hear the last o' it till my dying day in this countryside. But, at ony rate, I take my piper's pay in ha'pence out o' your skin, my man Alick!'

ADVENTURE XLII.

MUCKLE ALICK CONSIDERS.

'Noo that the collyshangie's dune,' quoth Mirren Douglas, 'ye micht gie us a word o' advice what we should do wi' the bairns. But come oot by. They are a' to their beds doon the hoose. And we can be takin' a look at the blossoms as we gang.'

'We are to plant cabbage here next year, Mistress Fraser says!' cried Muckle Alick.

'Havers!' said his wife. But Mistress Fraser gave Alick a look which said as plain as print, 'Have you not had enough?'

'Heard ye what the name o' the puir wandering things might be?' asked Mistress Fraser.

'Aye,' said Mirren, briskly, 'I hae heard a' about it. Their name is Kavannah. Their faither gaed awa' to Liverpool a while since to seek wark. And the bairns has left their mither in Edinburgh to seek their faither. And I judge their mither is a gye ill yin.'

'Did she tell ye that?' asked Muckle Alick, quickly.

'Na, but I jalloused it!'¹ said his wife.

'And hoo in the world could ye jallouse sic a thing as that?' said he.

'Just the way ye jallouse that the express is comin' when ye hear the whistle, and the signal draps to "clear," ye muckle nowt!' said his wife, taking what is known as a personal example.

'The lassie didna tell me yae single word, but the boy showed me an *arr*-mark on his temple. "The awfu' woman did that!" says he.'

'"And wha's the awfu' woman, my bonny man?"' says I.

'The lassie tried to turn him, but he oot wi' it. "It's just my mither!" says he. And if ye didna caa that a gye near signal, I ken na what is. It's as plain as findin' bits o' a dog collar in the sausage or a burn troot in the milk!'

But her husband did not laugh, as he usually did at her sayings. His own humour was not of that kind, but slow, ponderous, and deliberate.

'What are ye standin' there gapin' at?' demanded his wife.

Alick held up his hand. His wife knew that this was a signal that he wished to be left to think undisturbed a little longer. So she hurried Mistress Fraser along to look at what she called her 'nasty-hurcheons.' Sandy's mental machinery, like his bodily, was slow to set in motion, but it worked with great momentum when once it was set a-going.

Muckle Alick was putting two and two together.

'I ken a' about it,' he said at length, when the process was complete. 'We will need to be awesome careful. Thae bairns' faither never got to Liverpool; consequently it's little use them gaun there to seek him. He's either in his grave or the Edinburgh Infirmary. D'ye mind yon tramp man that gat the hurt in

¹ Shrewdly suspected it.

his head last spring, by hidin' and sleepin' in the cattle waggons when they were shuntin'? His name was James Kavannah. I'se warrant he was the bairns' faither!'

Mirren Douglas gave Muckle Alick a bit clap on the shoulder.

'Whiles ye are nane so stupid, man,' she said, 'I believe ye are richt.'

'And he was on his road to Liverpool, too,' added Alick, 'for when he was oot o' his mind he cried on aboot that a' the time. And aye the owerword o' his sang was "She'll no get me in Liverpool!"'

His wife looked at Alick. And Muckle Alick looked at Mirren.

'We'll keep them awhile, onyway, till they can get a better hame. The lassie will soon be braw and handy,' said Mirren.

'I'm thinkin',' said Alick, 'that the flower-beds will hae to come up after a', and we'll plant taties if the porridge pot shows signs o' wearin' empty.'

It was thus that our three wanderers found a place of lodgement in the wilderness in the kindly house of Sandyknowes.

'There's my sister Margaret up at Loch Spellanderie,' said Mistress Fraser; 'she was tellin' me on Monday that she was wantin' a lass. She's no very easy to leeve wi', I ken. But she will gie a guid wage, and the lass would get an insicht into country wark there. It micht be worth while thinkin' aboot.'

'It is kind o' ye to think o't,' said Mirren, doubtfully.

'O,' replied Mistress Fraser, 'I'm nane no sure o' that. As I tell ye, oor Meg is nane o' the easiest to serve. But, as the guid Buik says, it's a good and siccar lesson for the young to bear the yoke in their youth.'

'An' I'm sure thae puir bairns hae had their share o't,' said Muckle Alick.

'I suppose,' said Mistress Fraser, as she prepared to take her leave, 'that ye canna keep your thumb on the joke aboot the twa laddies and a lassie. Na, it's no to be expected o' you, Mirren. It's ower guid a tale to tell, specially on me, that aye prided mysel' on lettin' naebody draw my leg. But ye did me to richts this time, ye great stirk—to bring me fleelin' ower here wi' my coaties kilted as if I had the back-door trot, a' to see three newly-come-hame bairns, and the auldest o' them near woman muckle. And the loon that gaed me the cheat an elder o' the kirk! Sorrow till ye, Alick, but I could find it in my heart to clour your lugs even yet.'

'Ye hae my richt guidwill,' said Mirren, encouragingly.

But Muckle Alick only laughed. Then Tam Fraser came in seeking his wife.

'I hae been hearin' a' about your daft ploy, rinnin' in front o' the engine and gettin' dunted oot o' the road,' said he. 'Some folk was threepin' that it was awesome brave o' ye, but I think it was juist a daft, rackless triflin' wi' Providence. That's my thocht on't.'

'What was that? I hae heard tell o' it for the first time,' said Mirren. 'But that's nae new thing in this hoose. Alick's married wife is aye the last to hear o' his daft-like doin's.'

'O, nocht very special this time,' said Tam Fraser. 'He only threw a hundred and six Irish drovers oot o' a third story window ower the engine o' the Port express, but there's nae mair than ten o' them dead. And then he louped in front on an engine gaun at full speed and to draw some bairns frae below the wheels,' said Tam Fraser, giving the local version, corrected to date.

'Is this true?' said his wife severely, fixing her eyes upon Alick with a curious expression in them.

'There's juist about as muckle truth in it as there is in maist Netherby stories for common, after they hae gotten ten minutes' start,' said Muckle Alick.

'What is your version o't?' said his wife, never taking her eyes off her husband.

'O, it was naething to tell about,' said Muckle Alick. 'There was some drovers in a carriage where they had nae business, and they wadna come oot, till I gaed in to them—and then they cam' oot! And the wee laddie an' the bairn were comin' along the line afore the engine. And Geordie couldna stop. So I gied them a bit yirk oot and gat a dunch in the back wi' the buffer.'

Mirren took her husband by the rough velveteen coat-sleeve.

'My man!' she said, rubbing her cheek against it. 'But what for did ye no tell me?'

'I was gaun to tell ye the morn's mornin',' said Alick. 'There was nae harm dune, ye see, but yin o' my gallus buttons riven off an' the buffer of Geordie's engine smashed. I was gaun to tell ye in the mornin' about the button needing sewin' on.'

'Did ye ever see siccan auld fules?' said Tam Fraser, as he and his wife went home, 'rubbin' her cheek again his airm, that's as thick as a pump theekit frae the frost wi' strae rapes?'

'Haud your tongue, Tam,' said his wife, whose temper had suffered; 'if I had a man like that I wad rub my cheek against his trouser leg, gin it pleased him, the day by the length.'

ADVENTURE XLIII.

TOWN KNIGHT AND COUNTRY KNIGHT.

MR. CLEG KELLY awoke early on the day upon which he was to make the bold adventure of getting to Netherby Junction without enriching the railway company by the amount of his fare. But his conscience was clean ; he was going to work his passage. It is true that neither the general manager nor yet the traffic inspector had been consulted in the matter. But for the sake of Cleg's friend (to be exact, Cleaver's boy's sweetheart's fellow-servant, cook at Bailie Holden's), Duncan Urquhart was willing (and he believed able) to engineer Cleg's passage to Netherby without fee or reward.

Duncan was friendly with the guard of his goods train, which is a thing not too common with those who have to run goods trains together, week in and week out. The shunting at night in particular is wearing to the temper, especially in the winter time, when it is mostly dark in an hour or two whenever your train happens to start.

'Can you stand there and turn a brake?' said Duncan to Cleg, setting him in a small compartment by himself ; 'screw her up whenever we are running downhill. Ye will ken when by the gurring and shaking.'

Mr. Duncan Urquhart was a very different man during the day, to the gay and gallant evening caller who had won the easy-melted heart of the cook at Holden's—which a disappointed suitor once said bitterly was made of dripping. He was very grimy ; he spoke but seldom, and then mostly in the highly imaginative and metaphorical language popular on the Greenock and South-Eastern. Duncan Urquhart, as has already been mentioned, was quite a first-class swearer, and had an originality not common among engineers, which he owed to his habit of translating literally from the Gaelic. Also, though he swore incessantly, he never defiled his mouth with profanity, but confined himself assiduously to personal abuse, which, if less sonorous, is infinitely more irritating to the swearee.

So hour after hour Cleg stood in the train and was hurled and shaken southwards towards Netherby. He helped at the shunting, coupling, and uncoupling with the best. For, from his ancient St. Leonard's experience, he could run the coal-waggons to their

lies as well as a professional. And though his occupations had been varied and desultory, Cleg was a born worker. He always saw merely the bit of work before him, and he set his teeth into it (as he said picturesquely) till he had clawed his way through.

Thus it was that Cleg found himself at Netherby Junction one Saturday night at six o'clock. It was the first time he had ever been further than the confines of the Queen's Park. And his vision of the country came to him as it were in one day. He saw teams driving afield. He saw the mowers in the swathes of hay. He watched with keen delight the grass fall cleanly before the scythe, and the point of the blade stand out at each stroke six inches from under the fallen sweep of dewy grass.

'Netherby Junction! Guidnicht!' said Duncan Urquhart, briefly. He had an appointment to keep with the provost's cook, who was also partial to well-bearded men with blue pilot-cloth jackets. Duncan would not have been in such a hurry, but for the fact that it took him half an hour to clean himself. He knew that half an hour when you go a-courting, and when the other fellow may get there first, is of prime importance.

Now, as Cleg Kelly stepped out upon the cattle-landing bank, he caught a glimpse of the biggest man he had ever seen, walking slowly along the white dusty road which led out of the passenger station. He was swinging his arms wide of his sides, as very big and broad men always do.

Cleg sped after him at top speed and took a tour round him before he spoke. The big man paid no attention, walking with his eyes fixed on the ground.

'Are ye the man that pitched oot the drovers?' said Cleg at last, coming to anchor in front of the giant.

Muckle Alick stopped in the road, as much surprised as though the town clock had spoken to him. For Cleg put a smartness and fire in his question to which the boys about Netherby were strangers.

'Where come ye frae?' he said to Cleg.

'I come from Edinburgh to see Vara Kavannah,' said Cleg.

'Is she biding wi' you?'

'She was, till yestreen,' said Alick.

'And where is she noo?' said Cleg, buckling up his trousers.

'She is gane to serve at Loch Spellanderie by the Water o' Ae!' said Alick.

'And how far micht that be?' asked Cleg, finishing his preparations.

'Three mile and a bittock up that road!' said Muckle Alick, pointing with his finger to a well-made dusty road which went in the direction of the hills.

'Guidnicht!' cried Cleg, shortly. And was off at racing pace. Muckle Alick watched him out of sight.

'That coves a'!' he said, 'to think that I could yince rin like that to see a lass. But the deil's in the loon. He's surely braw an early begun!'

Then Muckle Alick went round and told his wife.

'It will be the laddie frae Eubra that got them the wark in the mill, and gied up his wood hut to the bairns to leeve in. What for did ye no bring him to see Hugh Boy and the bairn?'

'I dinna ken that he gied me the chance,' said Aleck. 'He was aff like a shot to Loch Spellanderie. I wad gie a shilling to hear what Mistress McWalter will say to him when he gets there. I houp that it'll no make her unkind to the lassie! If it does, I'll speak to her man. And at the warst she can aye come back to us. At a pinch we could be doing without her wage!'

'Aweel,' said his wife, 'the loon will be near there by this time.'

And the loon was.

Cleg was just turning up over the hill road towards Loch Spellanderie, when he heard that most heartsome sound to the ear of a country boy—the clatter of the pasture bars when the kye are coming home. It is a sound thrilling with reminiscences of dewy eves, or heartsome lowsing times, of forenichts with the lasses, and of all that to a country lad makes life worth living.

But to Cleg the rattle of the bars meant none of these things. Two people were standing by the gate—a boy and a girl. Cleg thought he would ask them if this was the right road to Loch Spellanderie.

But as he came nearer he saw that the girl was Vara herself. She was in close and, apparently, very friendly talk with a stranger—a tall lad with a face like one of the white statues in the museum, at which Cleg had often peeped wonderingly on free days when it was cold or raining outside.

'Vara!' cried Cleg, leaping forward towards his friend.

'Cleg! What are you doing here?' said Vara Kavannah, holding out her hand.

But there was something in her manner that froze Cleg. He had come with a glowing heart. He had overcome difficulties.

And now she did not seem much more glad to see him than she had been to talk with this young interloper at the gate of the field.

'This is Kit Kennedy,' said Vara, with a feeling that she must by her tactfulness carry off an awkward situation.

'O it is, is it?' said Cleg, ungraciously.

Vara went on hastily to tell Cleg about the children—how well and how happy they were, how Gavin was twice the weight he had been, how Hugh Boy ran down the road each night to meet Muckle Alick, and how she was now able to keep herself, besides helping a little to support Hugh and Gavin also.

Cleg stood sulkily scraping the earth with the toe of his boot. Kit Kennedy left them together, and was going off with the cows towards the byre. He had seen a tall, gaunt woman, who was not to be trifled with, walking through the courtyard, and he knew it was time to take the kye in.

Vara stopped talking to Cleg somewhat quickly. For she also had seen Mistress McWalter. She walked away towards the farm. Cleg and Kit were left alone.

Quick as lightning Cleg thrust his arm before Kit Kennedy's face.

'Spit ower that!' he said.

Kit hesitated and turned away.

'I dinna want to fecht ye!' he said, for he knew what was meant.

'Ye are feared!' said Cleg, tauntingly.

Kit Kennedy executed the feat in hydraulics required of him.

'After kye time,' said he, 'at the back o' the barn.'

Cleg nodded dourly.

'I'll learn ye to let my lass alane!' said the town boy.

'I dinna gie a button for your lass, or ony ither lass. Forbye there was nae ticket on her that I could see!' answered he of the country.

'Aweel,' said Cleg; 'then I'll warm ye for sayin' that ye wadna gie a button for her. I'm gaun to lick ye at ony rate.'

'To fecht me, ye mean?' said Kit Kennedy, quietly.

Thus was gage of battle offered and accepted betwixt Cleg Kelly and Kit Kennedy.

(To be continued.)

OUR EARLY FEMALE NOVELISTS.

IN the history of English story-telling an altogether notable place is occupied by Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales.' They are remarkable not only as masterpieces of narrative, but as containing both description of incidents and delineation of manners; not only as triumphs of literary expression, but as giving artistic form both to the romance of chivalry and to the tale of common life. Wholly wonderful it is that at so early a period such directness of movement and perfection of style, such vividness of portraiture and realism of incident, are found in verse, while centuries pass before similar excellences are found in prose. It is, indeed, peculiarly interesting to contrast Chaucer's practice with the subsequent course of English fiction. He sets his wits against the absurdities of the popular metrical romance, and jingles gaily along in the Rime of Sir Thopas till Harry Bailey, whose 'eeres aken with the drasty speche,' pulls him up with an impatient 'no more of this for Godes dignitee,' but the merry ridicule glanced harmlessly from the garrulous tellers of long-winded stories, who continued to delight many generations of auditors: the seventeenth century loved such romances as Boyle's 'Parthenissa,' and patient readers traced to the abrupt close its devious wandering in the regions of interminable talk and episode. When Chaucer abandoned his burlesque and took up the heavy tale of Melibeus, he inflicted on his audience a sample of that allegorical didacticism which long clung like a burr to the skirts of prose fiction; throughout mediæval times the allegory followed hard after the story-teller and compelled him to moralise. In view, however, of the early course of English fiction, the most interesting feature in the 'Canterbury Tales' is their intense realism, their free transcription of the actual life of ordinary folk. They abound in that unconventional treatment of man which Thackeray praised in Fielding and desiderated in the modern novel, and illustrate to the full Carlyle's words, 'the poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him and around him on every hand.' But the prose story-tellers were slow to take the lesson to themselves; till the seventeenth century they made only sporadic and short-lived visits to the firm mainland of

nature; they preferred to dwell on the floating islands of legend and romance. In the seventeenth century, however, writers seem to have become fully alive to the interest peculiar to real life, and there appear faint foreshadowings of the modern novel.

The Duchess of Newcastle has some claim to honourable mention for her 'CCXI. Sociable Letters' (1664). This lady, whom, in her own delightful language, 'it pleased God to command His servant Nature to endue with a poetical and philosophical genius,' was genius enough to see that letters to be readable need not be authentic, and so to secure the credit of being the first to employ a device that since her time has played a large part in prose fiction. She may be allowed, therefore, to introduce the women novelists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; she herself would doubtless lay some stress on her tales in prose as giving her a title to rank among the very earliest novel-writers, but the *Illustrissima Heroína* (to quote one of the many flattering titles bestowed on her) is not at her best in such performances as 'The Converts in Marriage.' A much more important figure in the beginnings of the English novel is Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640-1689), whose personal history is quite as interesting as any of her stories. Her father, a Mr. Johnson, had influence enough to get himself appointed lieutenant-general of Surinam, and he set sail for the New World, taking his wife and children with him. Mr. Johnson did not live to see the regions he had been sent to rule, but his wife and children spent some years in the beautiful and romantic scenery of Surinam, and there Aphra found the materials of her best novel, 'Oroonoko.' The time had not yet come when description of Nature was a recognised feature in a story, but 'Oroonoko' contains one or two passages where an attempt is made to reveal to the people of England the beauties of Surinam. These passages have been praised for their 'careless and picturesque power,' but possibly the second epithet is less deserved than the first. Moreover, one is bound to say that Mrs. Behn's imagination is apt to enter into the record of her experiences. When after her return to England she had the honour of telling her adventures to Charles II., she included among the fauna of South America snakes of terrific dimensions, but a certain licence has always been accorded to the retailers of snake stories. Her most extraordinary traveller's tale is her account of what she saw on her voyage from Antwerp to England. How many among those that go down to the sea in ships have seen floating on the waves 'a

four-square floor of various coloured marble, from which ascended rows of fluted and twisted pillars, embossed round with climbing vines and flowers, and waving streamers, that received an easy motion in the air; upon the pillars a hundred little Cupids clambered with fluttering wings! Little wonder, surely, that following the disappearance of this strange pageant came a violent storm, and Aphra and her companions suffered shipwreck. There is room for doubting whether Mrs. Behn put into any of her stories as much imagination as adorns the annals of her adventures. For her peculiar claim to attention is that at a time when the heroic romance was in fashion, she went for her characters and incidents to real life. When she appeared in London after her sojourn in Surinam, her good looks, her ready wit, and her lively conversation carried society by storm. She is described as 'a handsome dark girl, with a clear forehead, fine eyes, a full and merry mouth, an animated though voluptuous countenance, and a quick and ready tongue.' The merry monarch himself was charmed with the vivacious Astræa, and asked her to give to the world the moving narrative of the slave prince 'Oroonoko.' This is her best novel, and is in fact a striking book. Its sympathetic story of the high-souled African treacherously lured to the ignominy of slavery, of the sad fate of his faithful Imoinda, and of his own most cruel death, was possibly more rousing than even 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' and its power to touch the heart was greatly increased when Southerne dramatised and presented to the eyes of excited audiences the horrors of slavery. When Mrs. Behn's shortcomings are remembered against her, 'Oroonoko' should be put to her credit; it is instinct with real feeling and womanly sympathy. 'If,' says Miss Kavanagh, 'if she erred grievously, if she offended delicacy and morality itself by pictures not merely coarse but corrupting, it must never be forgotten that in this sense of the heroic, of all that is noble and manly, she was truly great; whether she invented or merely appreciated "Oroonoko," her merit is none the less.' In London the lively Astræa was besieged with suitors, but though her 'Letters to a Gentleman' show that when her feelings were really moved she was quite reckless, she was as a rule well able to take care of herself; and she fixed on the oldest, Mr. Behn, a rich London merchant of Dutch origin, who presently died and left her to widowhood and competence. In 1666 Aphra was sent by the King to Holland to watch the movements of the Dutch, and making Antwerp her head-quarters she set to work with consider-

able skill. Among her Dutch admirers was a Van der Albert, a man of position and importance, out of whom she wormed that De Witt and De Ruyter were planning an attack on the English shipping in the Thames. This vital news was at once sent to England only to be ridiculed, and Mrs. Behn, disgusted at the stupidity of the English ministers, turned from politics to domestic intrigue. Her handling of her Dutch lovers, Van der Albert and Van Bruin, is full of the boisterous, broad fun that riots in her best comedies, though it is conspicuously absent from her novels. They prefer the tragic and the sentimental, though it should be noted that 'The Adventures of the Black Lady' has a distinctly comical ending. At Antwerp Mrs. Behn got the groundwork of her second best novel, 'The Fair Jilt,' the history of a depraved and heartless coquette. Her dis fame as a dramatist has been handed down in Pope's well-known line—

The stage how loosely does Astræa tread,

and no defence can be offered for the gratuitous indecency of her plays: she certainly did her best to add to the iridescent filth of the Restoration drama. But her novels are not to be put on the same black list: they are indelicate and coarse, it is true, but not to an extent that outraged contemporary taste. While the plays treat of mere animal passion, the novels teach that women do not deserve to prosper when they are false to true love. In addition to their realism, these novels possess the merit of lively narrative, and make some attempt to portray distinct characters and to analyse emotion.

As has already been suggested, there was realism before the day of 'Oroonoko'; very striking examples indeed are found in some of the Elizabethan writers: it did not become a fashion, but showed itself only intermittently and tentatively. On the other hand, its appearance in Mrs. Behn's stories marked the beginning of a reign that lasted far into the eighteenth century; by that time the inevitable reaction had set in, and the swing of the literary pendulum revived romanticism and gave birth to the School of Terror. A writer that floated high on the rising tide of realism, and in her lifetime achieved both notoriety and reputation, was Mrs. Delarivière Manley. Her importance in her own world is attested by the frequent occurrence of her name in contemporary literature, and the notice taken of her by men of letters. For her tragedy of 'Lucius,' Prior wrote the epilogue; in Pope's charming

burlesque, when the Baron carries off 'the sacred hair,' he assigns to himself an immortality equal to that of Mrs. Manley's famous budget of scandal.

As long as 'Atalantis' shall be read,

So long my honour, name, and praise shall live.

In Swift's 'Journal to Stella' there are noticeably frequent references to Mrs. Manley—not always complimentary, for he thinks ill both of her spelling and of her personal appearance. Under date January 26, 1711-12, he writes: 'Poor Mrs. Manley, the author, is very ill of a dropsy and sore leg; the printer tells me he is afraid she cannot live long. I am heartily sorry for her; she has very generous principles for one of her sort, and a great deal of good sense and invention. She is about forty, very homely, and very fat.' An earlier passage in the 'Journal' testifies to her readiness of pen: 'I forgot to tell you that yesterday was sent me a narrative printed, with all the particulars of Harley's stabbing. I had not time to do it myself, so I sent my hints to the author of "Atalantis," and she has cooked it into a sixpenny pamphlet in her own style.' Of this once well-known writer there is little good to say: her life was vicious, and so are her books. Finding people eager to read what was true, or might be true, she fed 'the better vulgar' with a succession of scandalous memoirs and very indecent stories. Her 'Atalantis' (1709), a grossly immoral book, which satirised with merciless freedom many of the best-known personages of the day, had a great vogue, its prurient gossip attracting readers with a taste for literary carrion. It brought the author within reach of the law; but the legal proceedings failed of their intent, both retrospective and prospective, and Mrs. Manley continued to make highly-seasoned revelations about herself and about other people. Among her revelations is her opinion of her personal appearance. Speaking of herself under the fictitious name of 'Rivella,' she says: 'Till she grew fat there was not, I believe, any defect to be found in her body; her lips admirably coloured, her teeth small and even; a breath always sweet; her complexion fair and fresh. . . . Her hands and arms have been publicly celebrated: it is certain that I never saw any so well turned; her neck and breasts have an established reputation for beauty and colour; her feet small and pretty.' One must, in fairness, recall this also as often as one

recalls Swift's description of 'Rivella' as 'very homely and very fat.' Her 'Power of Love, in Seven Novels,' may be regarded as an attempt at fictitious narrative divorced from satire: it cannot be regarded as in any way redeeming her reputation, for Mrs. Manley's ideal of love is essentially coarse and sensual. Yet with all her imperfections on her head, Mrs. Manley may not be lightly passed by in a review of what women have done to develop the novel. She emphasised the interest attaching to fictitious narrative based on veritable experience, and she showed how deadly is satire lurking in fiction like a snake in the grass.

Another conspicuous figure among the women writers of these early days is Eliza Haywood, who has been exposed to the ridicule of all time by being offered in the 'Dunciad' as the less disgraceful prize in a certain Rabelaisian contest.

See in the circle next Eliza plac'd,
Two babes of love close clinging to her waist;
Fair as before her works she stands confessed,
In flowers and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dressed.

She has been called 'perhaps the most voluminous female writer this kingdom ever produced,' but it cannot be said that she used her pen to any good purpose. One need not accept in its entirety the accusation that she is one of 'those shameless scribblers who, in libellous memoirs and novels, reveal the faults or misfortunes of both sexes, to the ruin of public fame or disturbance of private happiness,' but it must be confessed that she claims the contemporary privilege of calling a spade a spade. Withal, Mrs. Haywood's 'Betsy Thoughtless' (1751) is a book that throws valuable light on the manners of its age. Like Madame D'Arblay's 'Evelina,' parts of which it has been supposed to have suggested, 'Betsy Thoughtless' is rich in illustration of life in the eighteenth century, and from the standpoint of the closing years of the nineteenth century one views with amazement the conduct of the men and women of a hundred years ago. Pope declared that

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen,

and cynics would fain assert that we of this generation have simply disguised the monster, who is as lusty as he was in Mrs. Haywood's time; but even cynics will not assert that women are now subject to the contemptuous treatment of those shameless days. Directly and indirectly the literature of the last century

treats woman as an inferior creature made for man's pleasure. When Milton makes Eve say to Adam—

O thou for whom
And from whom I was form'd, flesh of thy flesh,
And without whom am to no end,

he enunciates a doctrine that long governed and perverted the sexual relation. Addison habitually treats woman as a somewhat troublesome domestic pet, while the realistic novels of the last century represent her as the temporary object of insulting pursuit. There is an unconscious admission of this purely physical estimate of women in a sentence in Miss Fielding's 'David Simple': '[David Simple's] mother was a downright country-woman, who originally got her living by plain work; but, being handsome, was liked by Mr. Simple'; and it is noteworthy that the earliest women novelists did very little to maintain the honour of their sex. Not till we come to the novels of Charlotte Smith (died 1806) do we find a deliberate attempt to represent woman as demanding attention by intellectual and moral qualities.

'Betsy Thoughtless' was written towards the close of Mrs. Haywood's life, and before it appeared the reading public was in possession of Richardson's 'Pamela' and 'Clarissa Harlowe,' of Fielding's 'Joseph Andrews' and 'Tom Jones,' and of Smollett's 'Roderick Random'; that is to say, it was not published till the modern novel was fully developed. Her early novels have little merit, and are inferior in importance to Miss Fielding's 'David Simple,' which was issued in 1744, and, on historical grounds, must be regarded as an important book in the history of the novel. Richardson said of it: 'What a knowledge of the human heart! Well might a critical judge of writing say, as he did to me, that your late brother's knowledge of it was not (fine writer as he was) comparable to yours. His was but as the knowledge of the outside of a clockwork machine, while yours was that of all the finer springs and movements of the inside.' This is a judgment considerably overstrained; but, as a matter of fact, 'David Simple' shows notable power of mental analysis, and an effective command of satire. Read, for example, this of a girl that has sacrificed liking to vanity: 'For now, that she thought him irretrievable, she fancied in him she had lost everything valuable; and though that very day all her grief had been how to get rid of him, yet, now he was gone, she would have sacrificed (for the present) even her darling vanity if she could have brought him

back again'; and this of a man, old and ugly, who wished to marry: 'He was not afraid of being refused, for he had money enough to have bought a woman of much higher rank.' And there is a strong note in the words, 'David Simple was convinced that no circumstances of time, place, or station made a man either good or bad, but the disposition of his own mind.' Unfortunately, the book is a total failure in point of construction. The author had the ability to produce a book strong in characterisation, but the influence of the picaresque school of romance, the school of *Gil Blas*, led her to introduce a series of incidents which fail to interest the reader.

Satire found another employment in the hands of Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, who in '*The Female Quixote*' (1752) turned it with strong effect against the extravagance of the Scuderi romance. A special interest attaches to this book from the fact that the great Cham of literature himself is supposed to have written the last chapter, where the heroine is reclaimed from the dominion of absurdity. Mrs. Lennox was indeed a high favourite with Dr. Johnson, who has recorded that he 'dined at Mrs. Garrick's with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney: three such women are not to be found. I know not where I could find a fourth, except Mrs. Lennox, who is superior to them all.' This is praise from Sir Hubert Stanley, but the recipient seems to have deserved the esteem in which she was held by her contemporaries. She was an industrious and in some directions a meritorious writer, whose work enlisted the sympathy of others besides Johnson. Goldsmith wrote an epilogue for her comedy '*The Sister*,' and the Earl of Orrery contributed to her version of Brunnoy's '*Greek Theatre*.' An interesting incident in her life is the banquet given by the Ivy Club in honour of the publication of her '*Memoirs of Harriet Stuart*.' She and her husband were present at the feast, which lasted all night, and included among its attractions a large apple-pie presented by Dr. Johnson!

Posterity, however, has practically ceased to remember Mrs. Lennox, while it remembers with some distinctness one of the ladies whom Dr. Johnson ranks as her inferiors. Miss Burney, or Madame D'Arblay, retains a place in literature partly by her novels, partly by her exceedingly interesting diary. Nor must it be forgotten that, although '*Evelina*' appeared so long ago as 1778, there are many people still living who were young men and women when she died. She has been praised by Macaulay for

describing real life 'with broad comic humour,' yet in language that is never 'inconsistent with rigid morality or even with virgin delicacy,' and it is true that 'Evelina' possesses unique interest as a description of contemporary manners and is free from unnecessary coarseness; it is also true that the author has a keen eye for the ridiculous and a considerable gift of satire. Nevertheless Madame D'Arblay is not entitled to any high place as a novelist; her constructive skill is small, and her characters are for the most part what Jonson would have called 'humourists,' that is, they are the incarnation of qualities rather than flesh and blood individuals. Moreover, the author herself is a 'humourist,' her ruling passion is a morbid craving to be 'genteel'; she has no mercy for vulgarity or the vulgar, but she fails to see that her own worship of society conventions is itself vulgar. And hence one may doubt the propriety of assigning to her 'broad comic humour'; she was too much of a prig to be possessed of humour, which implicates geniality. Still Madame D'Arblay claims respect on the specific ground that she did much to purify an important form of literature, while she has a certain additional claim to remembrance from her connection with Dr. Johnson. Did not Dr. Johnson kiss her, and has she not recorded, 'To be sure I was a little surprised, having no idea of such facetiousness from him'?

A more likable personality than the demure Miss Burney is Mrs. Charlotte Smith, a woman on whom had descended many graces of body and of mind, but whom Fate refused any measure of happiness. Married at the age of fourteen to a man of mean and contemptible character, she found herself condemned to an existence of gloom and drudgery. After her father-in-law died, her husband quickly squandered a large inheritance, and found himself in a debtors' prison, where his wife attended him. From this time onwards Mrs. Smith's lot was to struggle to support herself and her family by hard and unremitting literary labour. Very little has lived of her many and varied productions, and yet she does not deserve to have been so completely forgotten. Mention has already been made of her honourable attempt to raise the estimation of her sex by declining to make the interest of her heroines depend on purely physical attractions, and some credit is also due to her for having been one of the very first writers to employ description to heighten the power of the novel. She seems to have been peculiarly susceptible to the influences of nature, and her writings contain many descriptive passages. The best of

her novels is 'The Old Manor House' (1793), which may still be read with pleasure; in it her somewhat moderate powers of construction and of character-drawing appear to most advantage, and have produced a really interesting story. She also wrote verses, whose prevailing tone is a gentle melancholy; in lines like these one hears a sigh for the careless joy of her childish years:

Ah, poor humanity! so frail, so fair,
Are the fond visions of thy early day,
Till tyrant passion and corrosive care
Bid all thy fairy colours fade away.
Another May new buds and flowers will bring,
Ah! why has happiness no second spring?

Like the present generation, eighteenth century readers were allured to the consideration of grave questions by means of the problem novel, for the era of the French Revolution was a time when the air was full of problems and when quite a vigorous crop of purpose novels sprang up. Among the writers affected by the demand for a return to pure, unsophisticated nature was the beautiful and daring Mrs. Inchbald. At an early age she was seized with a strong passion for the stage, and twice, while still in her teens, she ran away from home and went to London to see whether Fortune would do for her what application to stage-managers had failed to do. A sufficiently dangerous step this on the part of a young woman who is described as 'tall and slender, with hair of a golden auburn, and lovely hazel eyes, perfect features, and an enchanting countenance.' In her nineteenth year she married, her husband being an actor, and she herself now appeared on the boards. She does not seem to have been a very successful actress, but she was able to make considerable sums by her pen: she was exceedingly well paid for her plays, and very well paid for her two novels, 'A Simple Story,' and 'Nature and Art.' In spite of grave defects, for which the imperfect education of the author is so far responsible, these two stories are eminently readable. As has been said by critics, 'A Simple Story' is really two stories, and the double plot is handled with some awkwardness; moreover, there is a tendency to exaggeration in the portraiture, a notable example being the character of Sandford, the priest, whose churlishness is overdrawn to the point of childishness, while much of the writing is very raw. Still, the story holds the reader's attention; the chief figure, Miss Milner, is skilfully handled, and the incidents are well chosen and effectively used.

The lesson of the story, for it has a moral writ large on it, is that parents are bound to give the most serious consideration to the training of their children. In 'Nature and Art' the moral is of another kind. In it we are invited to despise William, the polished, insincere product of civilisation, and to admire his cousin Henry, the natural man, who cannot understand the hollow refinements of an artificial society. The reader has no difficulty in despising William, but it is not so easy to admire Henry, for in her anxiety to do justice to his transparent honesty, Mrs. Inchbald makes the worthy youth ridiculous. But withal 'Nature and Art' is an impressive story, and the author's dramatic experience stands her in good stead in the powerful scene where William, now risen to the bench, passes sentence of death on the wretched woman in the dock, whom he fails to recognise as the hapless victim of his own selfish passion. The conclusion of the book is notable: "While I have health and strength," cried the old man, and his son's looks acquiesced in all the father said, "I will not take from any one in affluence what only belongs to the widow, the fatherless, and the infirm; for to such alone by Christian laws—however custom may subvert them—the overplus of the rich is due." Mrs. Inchbald was left a widow when she was only in her twenty-sixth year, and though she was besieged with addresses, honourable and dishonourable, she repulsed them all, and bore herself with prudent wisdom among the distinguished people that gathered round the popular writer. At the same time she seems to have indulged a natural vanity over her good looks, her many conquests, and her noble acquaintances. Her letters tell us that she never gave up the domestic industry that early circumstances had made first necessary and then habitual. 'Last Thursday morning,' she writes, 'I finished scouring my bed-chamber, while a coach with a coronet and two footmen waited at the door to take me an airing.'

The time was now come when romanticism, which had had to give way before the tide of realism, was again to assert itself with power. In 1764 Horace Walpole had published his Gothic romance, 'The Castle of Otranto,' a book that introduced novel readers to a world very different from that in which they had been wandering under the guidance of the great novelists of the eighteenth century, and by-and-by this new kind of fiction was taken up with much success by two women, Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe. The modern reader is prone to grin broadly at

Walpole's elaborate machinery for making the flesh creep, and one may doubt whether there were ever readers that were disturbed by a passage like this: "Thou art no lawful prince," said Jerome; "thou art no prince—go, discuss thy claim with Frederic; and when that is done——" "It is done," replied Manfred; "Frederic accepts Matilda's hand, and is content to waive his claim, unless I have no male issue." As he spoke these words, three drops of blood fell from the nose of Alfonso's statue.

The most credulous devourer of romances must have drawn the line at a statue whose nose bled: it is a circumstance almost as ridiculous as the catastrophe in Lewis's 'Monk.' In that hysterical romance the demon's flight with the priest is intended to be appalling, but is in fact one of the most laughable things in our literature. However, with all its absurdities, the School of Terror was established, and held its ground till the day of Scott, whose early verse is strongly marked by some of its characteristics. But Walpole's successors and imitators felt he had made too severe a demand on the imagination of readers, and in her preface to 'The Old English Baron,' Clara Reeve points out some defects in 'The Castle of Otranto.' 'The machinery is so violent that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost *verge* of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains attention.' Miss Reeve's idea was to cut down the supernatural to an irreducible minimum, which 'the gentle reader' might fairly be asked to put up with. But 'The Old English Baron' (1777) is not a success in spite of the fact that we are not called upon to stand anything extra mundane beyond what might be inventoried as certain hollow groans, one suit of armour, clanking, and one phantom knight.

The book is much less impressive than the more famous 'Mysteries of Udolpho' (1794), by Mrs. Radcliffe, who must be allowed to have achieved excellence in the field of art she chose to cultivate, and this both Miss Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe's imitators failed to do. Every mind is affected—the average mind is very strongly affected—by gloom and expectancy, and of this feeling Mrs. Radcliffe takes skilful advantage. Even ordinary characters, natural incidents and natural scenery, loom large and portentous in the romantic obscurity through which we follow the mysterious windings of the narrative; again and again we seem to strain eye and ear to follow the progress of events, and await

the approach of some dread catastrophe. And, it is important to observe, Mrs. Radcliffe effects all this after parting completely with the supernatural; she is so careful, indeed, to show that terrified suspense may be induced by perfectly natural circumstances that she mars her art and goes far to offend the reader by irritatingly simple explanations of fear-inspiring phenomena. Nevertheless, Mrs. Radcliffe occupies one of the highest positions in the School of Terror, and she has earned her place by genuine merits of composition.

An altogether different interest attaches to the novels of the Sisters Lee, joint authors of a collection of stories called the 'Canterbury Tales.' Of these stories all save two were written by Harriet Lee, and to her, as the author of 'Kruitzner,' belongs the credit of having inspired Byron's 'Werner.' The two sisters deserve to be remembered for the brave way in which they faced the world. Their father had taken to the stage, where he commanded little success, and from him they inherited neither repute nor money: it was to the stage, however, that his daughters were indebted for a secure and honourable provision; the success of Sophia's comedy, 'The Chapter of Accidents,' enabled the sisters to set up a school at Bath, and in it they won a competence and general respect. The younger sister, Harriet, was the more voluminous writer: her dramatic work is of no value, but several of her tales are marked by strong interest, and must be regarded as an important contribution to the stream of fiction. Her sister demands special mention as the author of 'The Recess' (1784), one of the very earliest and, it must be added, very worst of our historical novels.

With the Sisters Lee we enter the nineteenth century, and they may be allowed to end the list of early female novelists. The last of the 'Canterbury Tales' appeared in 1805; nine years later a delighted public was reading 'Waverley.' We have therefore reached the period when the English novel entered on its most flourishing days, and now leave it, content to have indicated in some measure what women did to illustrate and develope the capabilities of fiction.

AN ARBITRARY LOVER.

SETH WAVING walked back into the village one evening as though he had only the day before quitted it.

It was two-and-twenty years since he had last looked down the village street—two-and-twenty years since he had turned and said ‘Good-bye’ softly to the familiar scene before departing with the policeman who had come to fetch him. Twenty-two years, and he had never looked on it since. He halted on the gentle rise at the top of the street, and gazed around him and in front; he was not given overmuch to sentiment, but his eyes softened as he gazed.

It was not much changed. There was a gap in the irregular row of brown thatched cottages, where a fire had consumed one of the oldest; and its very foundations were now lost under the straight rows of cabbage plants in the garden which had taken its place. The fir tree, too, was gone that had given a name to the three cottages sheltered under one roof at the further end of the road, just where it branched off to the squire’s park and the church. The village green was enclosed by a stout fence, and cows were grazing on it in the evening sunshine; the lord of the manor had grabbed it, and the children were playing in the dusty road instead of on the short sward that had belonged to the children of Seth Waving’s childhood.

But nothing else seemed changed.

He called to a small boy of about seven summers, who was making a dust pie in the road.

‘Come yer, my son, wilt?’

The child came, obedient, and stared at the stranger, with his thumb in his mouth, and his eyes uplifted. Seth Waving had known eyes like those, many years ago—grey, with dark iris, and long black lashes fringing them.

‘Bist frowtened?’ he asked the child, gently. ‘Yent no need, fur I wunt hurt ’ee. Who lives in thic thur house, now, down agen th’old tree stump?’

The child took his thumb from his mouth, and melted slowly into a prolonged howl. A girl, some few years his senior, looked over the hedge at him, and cried—

'Speak up to the gentleman, Seth Bradley! What is it you'd please to want, sir?'

'Be his name Seth Bradley?'

'Yes, sir.'

'An' what be yourn?'

'Jane Bradley, sir,' with a deep curtsy.

'An' your mother's?'

'Her be Widow Bradley. Father's dead.'

'How long hev' he bin dead?'

The girl looked at her small brother meditatively.

'He be seven,' she said, 'an' he were barn'd the day father died.'

The stranger looked closely at the little maid before asking his next question.

'Thy mother's name be Sarann, bent-a?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I thought I weren't makin' no mistake. Little maid, wheer do thy mother live?'

The little maid pointed to the brown roof which embraced three dwellings under its motherly wings of thatch, and Seth Waving strode down the street, and knocked at the furthest door of the three. A woman opened to him, and he said—

'Good evenin', Sarann.'

She gazed at him in a puzzled way for nearly a minute; then after bewilderment came uncertainty, and after uncertainty conviction.

'Good evenin', Seth,' she said quietly. 'You be come back, then?'

'I be, Sarann.'

'Fur good?'

'Fur good or fur bad—one or t'other on 'em.'

'Thy feyther be dead this nine year.'

'I knows it; an' Jenny be dead too, an' her husband married agen. I've a-heerd the main o' the news out in Australia. You was married too, Sarann, e'en-a'mwoast a year arter I'd a-gone.'

Mrs. Bradley's grey eyes came in search of his own, and then dropped to the ring on the fourth finger of her thin left hand.

'I were,' she said, calmly, and with resignation.

'Was you happy?'

'I had a comfor'able home, an' a comfor'able husband; I waited a bit for you, an' I couldn't wait no longer to be a burden

on mother. I thought you'd come home after you'd a-done the fourteen days, but you didn't; I never was one to chackle, but my heart were pretty nigh broke, Seth.'

'How could I come whoam when I'd a-ben took up for poachin', an' ahl the country knawed it? Who'd ha' gin ma reg'lar work agen, arter that?' he asked bitterly. 'Farmers 'ould ha' employed ma when 'em couldn't get no other, an', when 'em could, I'd ha' starved. I went abroad wi' Tom Simmons, an' him an' me've lived together up in the Bush ever sence. I didn't make my fortun', but I've a-got what'll bring ma in a suv'ren a week as long as I lives, an' summun else arter ma, whosomdever I med leave un to.'

Mrs. Bradley sighed. 'My husband died seven year ago last Michaelmas,' she said. 'My eldest darter be twenty year old, anighst: I've got five, an' the youngest were barn'd the day his feyther died.'

'I've a-sid he,' remarked the visitor; 'he be called Seth, too.'

A faint colour showed itself in Mrs. Bradley's pale cheeks, and made her look half a dozen years younger.

'I named un fur you,' she said simply. 'I thought 'twere no harm when my husband were dead; an' we *was* friends, Seth.'

'Yes, we was friends, Sarann,' he answered, looking at her more closely.

She was tall and thin, and her hair was brushed back straight from her low forehead in an unbecoming and uncompromising manner. There were a few lines of care on her brow, and her cheeks were sunken, as though she habitually went short of food; there was a look almost of gauntness in her lean form. But her eyes were grey, and large, and heavily fringed; her nose was straight, and her pale lips had lost none of their curves. In her clear skin mantled a delicate colour still.

'You haint much changed, though you be older,' remarked Waving meditatively. 'An' you be thin, too, as if you didn't get awver much to eat, however. Times has bin hard, I reckon.'

'I ain't never gone to the parish. I gets work two or three days a week, an' Nellie arns good wages an' helps me all she can.'

'An' your boys?'

'Fred baint very stiddy; he be young yet, an' he'll come all right, plaise God, but he don't bring home more'n enough to kip un. Dick on'y gets boy's wage, an' you knows what that be.'

'So you goes short, Sarann?'

'I be used to 't,' said Mrs. Bradley without emotion.
Waving shook his head, and then looked again at her.

'I've got a pound a week,' he said presently.

'Ah!'

'Tis more'n I wants, so to spake.'

'Mebbe so, Seth,' said Mrs. Bradley, to whom it was a large fortune.

'We was friends wunst, Sarann.'

'Ah-h,' again, with the soft, long-drawn vocal which indicates ungrudging assent in Oakshire.

'We kep' comp'ny wunst.'

'We did, Seth.'

'Shall us kip comp'ny again?'

Mrs. Bradley gave a scared look at him, and threw her apron over her face with a quick movement.

'My money 'ould do fur both on us, an' your two little uns; an' t'others could hae a home wi' us. We med so well make a a match on't—wi' your consent, Sarann.'

The apron was withdrawn by Sarann's trembling hand, and her face, flushed pinkly, looked out again at her visitor.

'We be too old now,' she murmured. 'Folks 'ould laugh at us.'

'Dall 'em; what'd that matter to we?'

'I ain't expected it; I didn't know you was comin' home. I didn't hardly know as you was still alive.'

'But you gave a thought to ma sometimes, didn't 'ee, Sarann?'

'Yes, I gave 'ee a thought sometimes,' she admitted.

'An' we *was* friends wunst?'

'Ah-h.'

'Have you aught to say agen ma?'

'No, Seth.'

'Do 'ee cling still, as the sayin' is, to Ben Bradley?'

'Not to call it *cling*, Seth.'

'Hev' you took to arranother man sence his death?'

'No.'

'Then I reckons we'll make a match on't as soon as you likes. I ain't never forgot you out there, Sarann.'

The pale woman, still a little flushed, got up and raked together the dying embers in the fireplace, as though she were striving to put fresh life into the long dead ashes of her marital love. She was too conventional, like most of her class, to depart from recognised methods of courtship; she had not seen Seth Waving for

more than a score of years, and in spite of the sentimental memory which, although it was long buried out of sight, had never waned in all the years of his absence she could not bring herself to depart suddenly from the traditions of her lifetime.

'I'd *like* to marry you, Seth,' she said weakly, 'if so be you're willin', as you says—but I don't know——'

'What doesn't know?'

'How folks 'ould take it.'

'Dall folks, one an' all; 'tis fur you an' me to manage this yer job.'

'Mebbe the childern 'ouldn't like it.'

''Tis fur you an' fur me; an' if 'tis best fur we 'tis best fur the childern.'

'An' the neighbours med think 'twas too suddent.'

'What! arter two an' twenty year?'

A tear started to the pale woman's eye, and she wiped it with the corner of her apron, but said nothing. Her under lip was trembling, and she could not trust herself to speak.

'Well, Sarann?'

Again no answer; and Waving left his chair and took from her the tongs with which she was still coaxing the cinders together, and laid them down on the bricks which served as a fender.

'Set down,' he said, 'an' gie me my answer. Will you marry ma as soon as parson can call us?'

'You was allus so arbitery, Seth,' murmured Mrs. Bradley feebly.

'An' I reckons 'tis summun as is arbitery as you needs to kape the life in your body, wi' ahl they childern a-eatin' you up. You trust to me; I be rough, an' I ain't got much religion, mebbe, livin' in the Bush ahl these years; but I've lived straight, so help me God, an' I ain't got no bad ways. Now, my dear, 'tis yes or no—one or t'other on't.'

'Then 'tis no,' cried Mrs. Bradley in desperation; 'leastways, not now—leastways, 'tis no. I be kindly obliged to 'ee, Seth, but I can't do 't. Mebbe there's others as is younger as you'll come to fancy, if you wants a wife.'

'Mebbe there be,' replied Seth calmly.

Waving took a cottage in the village, and settled down within a stone's throw of his old sweetheart. When he hired a waggon and went to Oldborough for the furniture he found it necessary

to buy, he let the things stand on the bit of green outside his door for some hours before taking them in to their places. They were good things, and solid of their kind, and he thought perhaps Sarann might notice them. Sarann did notice them, and gauged their value to a shilling; and praised them to the woman next door in a distant and uninterested kind of way. Then she went into her own house and wiped off a tear with her apron; and said to the ashes while she raked them together:

‘My furniture ’ould ha’ held good for another twenty year; an’ my bedstead be a better un than his’n.’

It seemed to her a waste to spend so much good money on things that were not really needed.

But her daughter Nellie had much to say about the new furniture.

She came in, in her bright, fresh beauty—a young and lovely likeness of her mother. Her hair was not dull, and faded, and thin, but golden and plentiful, and it waved in little rough curls over her temples, as her mother’s, perhaps, had done many years before. Her eyes were soft and blue, and her skin was of cream and of roses; and her hands were small and smooth, and not toil-reddened as her mother’s were. For, indeed, Nellie took good care that her hands should not be roughened through too much hard work; and she had left her one situation partly on this account, and had never sought another. Straight and lissom as a well-grown young sapling, she carried herself with an ease and grace not often seen in the village, and her neighbours were not slow to prophesy that she would come to no good, as is the way of neighbours.

‘Have you seen Mr. Waving’s furniture, mother?’ she asked, as she came in and hung her gaily flowered hat on a peg behind the kitchen door.

‘Ah, my dear.’

‘Isn’t it lovely?’

‘Yes, my dear.’

‘That’s the very chest of drawers Ernest looked at last market-day,’ continued Nellie with a sigh. ‘He’d ha’ bought it if he’d had another half-crown in his pocket; an’ now ’tis gone.’

‘There be plenty more as good at Oldborough.’

Nellie sighed again. She was not as yet entitled to inquire too curiously into the details of Ernest’s expenditure; but she had reason to believe that, being balked of the chest of his desire for

want of an extra half-crown, he had spent the money he had saved on a new suit of clothes. The carrier had reported on his last round that he was bringing a parcel from Snip's for Ernest, and Nellie could only wait anxiously for Sunday to confirm her fears, a visit to his mother having brought forth no result whatever.

'Mrs. Stone says Mr. Waving courted you, mother, before you married father,' said Nellie, with an effort rousing herself from her despondency with regard to the coveted chest of drawers.

'Did she, my dear?'

Nellie looked closely at her mother. Could it be that she was blushing, or was it the reflection of the fire on her thin cheeks?

'It must be the fire—at her age, too!' she said to herself, 'it *would* be ridiculous.'

'Didn't you love him, mother?'

'I liked him well enough, my dear.'

'Then why didn't you marry him?'

'Because I married your father.'

'Mrs. Stone says Mr. Waving was sent to prison for poaching.'

'He was, Nellie.'

'But she says no one will think anything of that now; he's come back quite rich, she says, and no need to work, if he don't choose, so long as he lives. Don't you think him handsome, mother?'

'Looks is deceivin' sometimes; handsome is as handsome does,' replied Mrs. Bradley, with one of the platitudes in which it was her wont to seek refuge.

'I ain't talking of *doing*—I'm talking of looks. Don't you think he's handsome for his age? Of course he's old, and his hair's getting grey, but there's something about him that's—that's distingy,' concluded Nellie, with a reminiscence of her novel-reading vocabulary usually reserved for girl-friends in the village.

'Mebbe so, my dear,' responded the mother as she went about her occupation.

Although Waving had, as they said, no need to work for a living, he did not settle down to a life of idleness. When he had furnished the house and planted his garden, he got employment as a woodman on the squire's estate, and worked as hard as the best of them. He was received by the society of the village with a subdued friendliness which intimated that so long as he continued to behave himself circumspectly he should be welcome in the little community. At the same time the feeling was fairly general that

having crossed the sea and lived in foreign parts he must have acquired a certain hidden store of wickedness—wickedness which might at any moment exhibit itself, and give the signal for his downfall in the eyes of the village world. But as time went on, and no scandal attached itself to him in any way; as he worked as hard as his fellows, paid his bills regularly, drank no more beer than sufficed him for his evening meal, and generally conducted himself in most conventional style, he was gradually accepted by his peers as a person of whom no one could say a hard word, and therefore worthy of all estimation so far as present developments might admit. It was even suggested that he was entitled to choose a wife from the village; and, indeed, before the summer was ended, it was obvious to the meanest rustic capacity that he had already made his election, and that pretty Nellie Bradley would be the proud sharer of his weekly income.

For Waving spent many an hour at the Fir-tree Cottage in pretty Nellie's company. It was judged that his first visits were paid to her mother, for the sake of old times; his later ones to the daughter for the sake of her bright, fair face, and gay, winning ways. She was like Sarann before Sarann had grown thin, and pale, and careworn; perhaps, after a while, he forgot the likeness, because so little of it was now remaining, and thought only how pretty was the daughter, and how bright, and how winning. Presently he suggested an occasional walk after Sunday evening service—the preliminary attention of a Wessex courtship—and Nellie, who was fascinated by her new admirer's strength and bigness, and handsome, toil-lined face, was proud to accompany him, and to submit to the teasing of the other village girls on the subject of her new 'young man.'

She was quite prepared to accept Waving as a very eligible husband when he should propose to fill the situation. Apart from her suddenly awakened admiration for him, though hardly less of a factor in her regard, was the undoubted circumstance of his immense wealth, which would give his wife a position superior to all others in the village after the innkeeper's lady. Such a position was not to be lightly disregarded, and certainly Nellie never dreamed of disregarding it.

Perhaps at first a qualm or two visited her heart when she thought of Ernest Stone's forlorn state, but she was easily able to excuse her desertion of him. In the first place, she could console herself with the knowledge that he had never definitely offered to

keep company with her, though he had walked with her for many months. Moreover, he had bought no more furniture since he missed the chance of the luckless chest of drawers, and his Sunday attire of late conclusively proved the direction his savings were now habitually taking. Of course she liked him, but she could not think of marrying a man who was content to live on indefinitely in his mother's cottage without making more effort than did Ernest for a separate establishment and a well-furnished home. So Nellie walked out on Sunday evenings with Seth Waving, and Sarann went home after church, and sat over her dying embers, and longed for a week-day task of mending or darning, that she might devote her thoughts to it without distraction.

Nellie liked to talk to her mother about her new admirer, and never wearied in her questions concerning his younger days. Mrs. Bradley listened, and responded, and sympathised, and prayed for her child's happiness. Her religion was not, perhaps, a very real thing to her, but she believed in the power of a great unknown Being to confer benefits, and she asked them assiduously for her pretty Nellie. If Nellie liked Seth, and if—if Seth liked Nellie, what was there to hinder their marriage? He was a kind man, if somewhat arbitrary; perhaps a softer and more yielding wife might have suited him better than her daughter, but he would make allowance for Nellie's imperious disposition, and give in sometimes to her wishes, even if they clashed with his own. Mrs. Bradley knew very well that Nellie must have her own way if the house was to be a peaceful one, and doubtless Seth would find this out too. But still—but still—if Ernest had been more persistent in his wooing, no other man would have had a chance in comparison with him.

So the time went on, and winter came—a winter hard and cruel, and dark with cold and snow. And little Seth Bradley sickened with the measles, and when the measles had left him a strange chill and shivering remained with him, and he began slowly to waste away before his anxious mother's eyes. To get him food and comforts she worked almost every day at the inn, charring, washing, baking—anything that would bring her in a shilling for little Seth. She stitched her fingers to the bone by the light of a flickering tallow candle each night, while she made warm garments with the flannel she bought for him; she spent her scanty dinner hour, snatched from the comfortable table at the inn, in cooking little meals which might tempt him to eat,

and in kneeling by his cot while he swallowed minute portions with difficulty and pain. She went out in the cold, cheerless mornings, long before sunrise, to pick sticks in the park to warm her boy's shivering limbs as he lay by the kitchen fire with the death-flush on his cheek, which all save herself could interpret aright. And she starved, and went cold, and wore herself out in her loving labour, as only a mother can.

During the many weeks of little Seth's illness Waving came often to the Fir-tree Cottage—even more often than had been his wont, though he stayed but a few moments when he came. He never took Nellie for a walk now, but he would come every night and ask her of the child's health, while the mother sat by with her swift needle, hardly listening to the low murmur of talk between the two. Waving would bring some trifling present for the child—a picture, an orange, a toy, anything for which he had expressed a wish, though, indeed, the tiny wasted hands could hardly hold the big man's gifts. Then he would go out as quietly as he had come in, with a low 'Good night' that included both mother and daughter, and could not disturb the drowsy sufferer in the cot.

So the days wore on, and with the rejoicings of Christmastide little Seth's pains were over, and his mother sat in her hard elbow-chair by the dull embers, and gave small heed to those of her children who yet remained to her. Nellie came, and knelt by her side, and whispered that Ernest had come back to her, and that she was happy again; Fred, in his rough, boyish way, brought all his weekly earnings, and poured them into her lap, and promised that no more should go in future to the public-house; and even little Dick and Jane tried many small expedients to 'hearten up mother.' She spoke gently to them all, but Seth, her baby, was gone, and nothing else seemed of consequence to the forlorn heart.

But as the weeks went on she roused herself again, and went about her daily round of work once more, only shunning her neighbours for fear they should speak to her of her trouble. Waving dared not come near her, for her sad, calm face discouraged him, as it did her other friends when they passed her at her garden gate, or on her way to her work at the inn. On Sunday evenings she would go to church in the old, thin, mourning garments that had served her for best since her husband's death, eight years before—garments that scarce could keep out

the cold winds of early spring, which pierced her through and through. Waving furtively touched the thin black shawl one Sunday evening as she passed him in the church porch, and then looked down at his own warm coat, comparing it with her scanty covering.

Nellie's radiant happiness demanded much sympathy from her mother. She came in one day after a visit to Mrs. Stone, and poured out her young heart to the ever-patient ears that listened so kindly to every word.

'Mother,' she cried, with a happy blush on the fair young cheek, 'Ernest has bought a chest of drawers,' the very fellow to Mr. Waving's, and a polished walnut table, at the sale yesterday. There isn't any table like it this side of Oldborough, I'll warrant. And he has taken the cottage on Primrose Hill, and he thinks he'll have furniture enough by midsummer——'

'And then, Nellie——?'

'And then, mother, he wants to get married, and I've said Yes.'

'And do you love him, my dear? Do you love him better than arranother man as you've a-seen?'

Nellie looked scornful.

'Do you mean Mr. Waving?' she cried. 'That old fellow! Why, he's over forty, and getting grey too, and 'tis a funny sort of courting *he* does, with his solemn face, and his "How be your mother to-day?" Why, he never even offered to kiss me. I believe he only come here so often because you and him was old friends. Oh, I dare say he's all very well in his way, for them as likes old folks, but I've never cared for anyone but Ernest, though I did think he was serving me bad last summer.'

'And wasn't he, my dear?'

'No, mother, he wasn't. Those clothes were left him by his uncle as died, and Snip made them over to fit him. Ernest's been saving all this time, and he's got a pretty penny laid by, I can tell you; only he was shy, and when he thought I'd gone again him he wouldn't say nothing. So we was parted for a bit, but it's all right now.'

Mrs. Bradley put down her iron, and kissed the pretty face upturned to her.

'God bless you, Nellie!' she said, and her eyes filled with tears as she saw her daughter trip gaily down the court to rejoin her Ernest at the gate. 'God give my girl a good husband—as good

a husband as mine was, and more love in her heart for him than I had for her father. God forgive me !'

She tested the heat of her iron with a damp finger, and finding it cold set it down on the bricks by the fire, while she searched for the handkerchief in her pocket.

She leaned her head on her ironing-table, while hot, unwonted tears fell on the white linen she had so carefully ironed. A foot-step sounded on the threshold, and a large frame filled up the narrow doorway, while a pair of friendly eyes gazed at her where she sat.

'Sarann !' said a deep voice presently ; 'Sarann ! Can I come in, Sarann ?'

She got up in haste, and wiped her eyes furtively ; and Waving came in, shutting the door behind him with an air of mastership.

'I've summat to say to 'ee, Sarann.'

'Yes, Seth.'

'Do 'ee mind how long 'tis sence I come back from furrin parts ?'

''Tis a year to-day.'

'Ah, 'tis a year to-day. Folks 'ouldn't be scandalised now, would 'em ?'

'Scandalised, Seth ?'

'If you an' me was to make a match on't, my dear, I means. Now, look yer, Sarann ; laist time I put it to 'ee you said your say, an' I scorned to go contrairy to 'ee. But this yer time I be gwine to say mine. So don't 'ee cut in, I warns 'ee, 'cept 'tis to answer up to my questions.'

'You was allus arbitery,' murmured Mrs. Bradley trembling, but not refusing to hear him.

'I takes it fur Gospel truth as you don't cling no more to Ben, as the sayin' is, an' hev'n't a-took up wi' arranother man ?'

'No.'

'An' I reckons a widder's life ent ahl jy, wi' a pack o' children to find vittles fur ?'

'No, Seth.'

'I reckons it bain't a life as arraone 'ould choose, willin', if a could hev arrathing better. Yen't that so ?'

'Yes.'

'An' you hev'n't got nowt to say agen ma, hev 'ee, Sarann ?'

'No.'

'An' us *was* sweethearts wunst, wasn't us ? An you've a-give ma a thought or two sence you was left a widder, ain't you ?'

'Yes.'

'Yes to both on 'em?'

'Yes, Seth.'

'I thought I worn't makin' no mistake. There be times as a man should lead a 'ooman, an' there be times as a 'ooman should lead a man—though 'em bain't many. This yer be my turn. I seed parson a-gwine down the street half-an-hour ago, an' I told un to gie out the banns to-morrow, Sarann; so we'll be married Monday fortnit, my dear.'

A faint blush mantled in Mrs. Bradley's clear, pale cheek, and a faint smile curved her trembling lips.

'You was allus so arbitery, Seth,' she said weakly.

THE SALMON AND ITS KIN.

WITH all our practical and scientific means of investigation, it is strange how much remains to be known about the salmon. There are certain phases of its life-history which are as yet a mystery, and which the closest scrutiny has not enabled us to unravel. Its food, its migrations, its spawning, its very appearance vary in different rivers, though peculiar local conditions doubtless account for much of the confusion which now exists. There is one fact in connection with the species which is placed outside the range of controversy, and which ought to prove valuable in the future. It is now definitely known that in the great majority of cases salmon return to spawn in the river where they were bred. What it is that enables a fresh-run fish to do this is not clearly known, though Buckland in his life was strongly of the opinion that the chief sense employed was that of smell. This, however, is immaterial, though it is an important fact that the salmon returns to its old haunts.

This aristocrat of the waters is essentially a sea fish; and, at whatever season it may enter a river, the act is closely connected with the reproduction of its kind. Salmon begin to 'run' in English rivers from May to December, though the autumn months mark the time of the heaviest migrations. The ascent of the rivers is not rapid. Even if these be bank-full and the usual obstructions passable, the fish do not hurry, but love to examine the ground as they go.

There is a deafening roar from the water, and the impalpable spray constitutes a constant maze of translucent vapour. Ever and anon a big fish throws its silvery form many feet above the water, endeavouring to clear the obstacle. Many times it is beaten back, but at last gains a ledge, and by a concentrated effort manages to throw itself into the still, deep water beyond. Instead of leaping, the female fish try to run through the foam, and on from stone to stone, until a last leap takes them over. In the absence of salmon passes, many of the fish are picked from the rocks dead, and the majority of these prove to be males. This preponderance is also noticeable on the spawning beds, though why it should be so is not definitely known. The 'redds' are selected

where the river is clearest and purest, where there is bright gravel and an absence of sediment. As the she fish settles to spawning, she scoops out a hole in the sheltering gravel, and is closely attended by her mate. He indulges in many beautiful evolutions, and guards her against every enemy. When spawning is concluded, it is found that she has nearly a thousand eggs for every pound of her live weight. Take a handful of these pearly pink eggs, and examine them. Although delicate in appearance, they are not only capable of standing great pressure, but are so elastic that if one be thrown down it will rebound like an indiarubber ball. Once the eggs are hatched, the fry afford delicate morsels to a whole host of aquatic creatures—birds, insects, and fishes themselves. When the fry attain to the 'smelt' stage they have an equally hard time of it, and the number of their enemies is hardly to be reckoned.

Salmon are local in their haunts and habits, and on a favourite 'redd' numbers of fish are found. This hardly conduces to success, for when the beds are full of fish they are routed over and over until much spawn is spoiled; and it is when salmon are abundant and lie closely that the dreaded disease makes its appearance. This shows as a white fungus about the head and shoulders, and gradually spreads until the fish sickens and dies. Hardly anything is known about the disease, except that it is infectious. Newly run salmon that come in contact with affected fish soon develop it, and when once it breaks out there is scarcely an individual but what shows signs of the fungus. Spates and floods tend to eradicate it, and these alone.

An interesting fact anent salmon is that they produce hybrids with other fish. They breed freely with brown trout, brook trout, also those peculiar to Loch Leven; and this is the more remarkable as the offspring from this cross in no wise sacrifice their fertility. That salmon and trout are commonly found on the same 'redd' has long been known to poachers, though scientists have only admitted the fact recently. Here is an actual incident. Upon one occasion a poacher found a freshly run male salmon watching over a female, the former of which he gaffed. Knowing that a second suitor would soon take the place of the first, he allowed the she fish to remain. A second male attended her, a third, and a fourth, she starting down stream each time her lord was taken. Upon her fifth return she brought back a large yellow trout, and so much interest did the proceeding excite that for a

time the two were left unmolested. The spawn was then taken, hatched on a grill, and large healthy fry was the result.

Here the normal life-history of the salmon must be recurred to. After a brief period spent upon the spawning beds, the breeding fish return to salt water. At this time they are in a wretchedly poor condition—lean and lank, the flesh loose and ‘flabby.’ The spawned fish are known as ‘kelts.’ Once, however, in the food-abounding sea, they quickly recover condition, feeding now, for the most part, on shrimps. And here for a time we may leave them, whilst we return to the river. The eggs are hatched, the fry have absorbed their yolk sacs, and the tiny things are scattered over the higher river reaches. As the warm days develop the soft-winged ephemerae, the fry begin to forage for themselves, and soon comes a crisis in their life-history. Some day a brown spate comes from the hills, the water is turbid, and in shoals the silvery samlets rush down to the sea to explore its wide world of waters. They usually travel with the first floods of April and May, and, having by this time assumed the migratory dress, are termed ‘smolts.’ At one time it was supposed that the young of salmon left their river nursery for the sea during the first spring, but this is not so. Some few early spawned fish may do this, but the majority wait until the following year. Once in the sea, smolts grow at a rapid rate, and, after from four to twelve months, return to the rivers where they were bred as ‘grilse.’ As the grilse make up stream they are pretty, silvery fish, and afford good sport. They vary greatly in weight, and it is somewhat curious that, upon their first arrival, they are invariably covered with ‘sea-lice.’ These uninvited guests are soon ridded in the rivers, as they do not long survive immersion in fresh water.

Entering rivers to spawn, going down to the sea, and re-entering the rivers, constitutes, shortly, the life-history of the salmon. Speaking generally, it feeds but little in fresh water, and loses weight; in the sea it feeds ravenously, and increases at a most remarkable rate. One British-killed salmon has attained to seventy pounds in weight and four and a half feet in length. This fish was taken in the Tay, and a cast of it is now in the Buckland Museum. Although this was a monster fish, almost without precedent, yet forty-pound salmon are not at all uncommon. In rivers the food of the salmon consists mainly of ephemerae and their larvæ, worms, and the spawn and fry of various fresh-water fishes. In the sea its food is more varied and abundant. Salmon

are invariably found in the proximity of shrimp grounds, and they devour enormous quantities of sand eels. That, however, upon which they most depend for sustenance is the myriad fry of the coarser sea fish. Of course, it is difficult to follow the fish in its migrations in salt water; but, from several sources, hints may be had of its wanderings. Salmon seem to swim in the sea in comparatively small droves, probably of from twenty to a hundred; and it is certain that they are much given to hugging the coast line. They stay long on banks or in channels, where favourite food is to be had, and are only driven off by receding tides. In spring and summer they do not inhabit deep water, but keep more to the banks, usually in only a few fathoms of water. At this time the sand-launce is much fed upon, as is the sea urchin in its earlier stages. Huxley asserts—and his assertion stands almost alone—that the salmon's food chiefly consists of a numerous class of small creatures (*entomostracous crustacea*) found in semi-solid masses upon the surface of deep water; in short, that the salmon swims in a species of animal soup, in which it has merely to open its mouth and swallow what enters it.

Every creature here named as constituting the food of salmon has been found in the fish itself, though, as these soft-bodied creatures are so quickly digested, positive identification is rendered most difficult. Both salmon and trout have the power (which, under certain circumstances, they exercise) of ejecting any food recently taken when they find themselves hooked or in the meshes of a net. Quantities of herrings have been found thus ejected. That the salmon is a voracious feeder in the sea is certain, and whilst in its native element it lays up a large store of fat—a fact which probably accounts for its feeding but little in rivers. Like many other sea creatures, it is able to draw upon this provision during its period of semi-fasting, as when on the spawning beds. The intestines of sea salmon are frequently almost buried in layers of fat, and another coating lies between the skin and the flesh. Salmon constantly confined in fresh water, as in lochs, and those which can take the sea at pleasure, are altogether different fishes. The flesh of the latter is firm and pink, that of the former white and insipid. As salmon grow rapidly, they probably do not attain to a great age.

After the salmon and trout proper come a number of close cousins, concerning which much confusion still exists. This, however, is not for want of attention to the subject by naturalists

The discrimination between species and varieties is often a difficult matter, and in this connection no rule which has been laid down has held good for any length of time. This is owing to the fact that fresh-water fishes adapt themselves to local circumstances more effectually and more rapidly than any other class of creatures. In fact, in the family under notice it is hardly known what are salmon and what are trout, and the only satisfactory division is that of migratory and non-migratory species. These include the salmon, brown brook trout, bull trout, salmon trout, gillaroo, semin, short-headed salmon, great lake trout, Loch Leven trout, a number of others, and some char. Many of these are nothing more than varieties with local peculiarities, probably produced by different conditions of food and water in their particular haunts. The inclination of naturalists has been to evolve species from mere varieties by a process of hair-splitting; but in the future, and as the laws which govern evolution become better understood, the tendency will probably be the other way.

The salmon or sea trout is, as its name implies, one of the migratory species. It is common in most salmon rivers, and is widely distributed throughout the country. In Ireland it is the white trout, in Cornwall and Devon the peal. Although not now so abundant as formerly, it is still taken in quantities in the salmon rivers of both our east and west coasts. Like its congeners, the salmon-trout enters rivers to spawn, leaving them again after depositing its eggs. As rivers are 'early' and 'late,' the fish ascend from the sea through summer and autumn, spawning from October to December. The kelts descend during the spring months at the same time as the smelts, after which the latter rapidly increase in size.

The sea trout is one of the favourite fishes of the angler. It is usually game for some weeks after trout are 'out,' and considerable interest attaches to its coming. The fisherman watches for signs of the sea fish in autumn as eagerly as he hoped for the advent of the swallow in spring. The presence of the former betokens long night fishings and abundant sport. He is not so wary as the trout, and a far more assiduous feeder. In September anglers who love autumn fishing move down to the deeps to meet the coming army. The fish enter the river in shoals, and every freshet enables them to gain a higher reach. As soon as they have had time to disperse, the angler takes the self-same stand from which only the frost drove him last year, and once more he

tries all his old flies. The sea trout are not slow to take his lures, and many a stout fight is made in the darkness. More often than not the fisher knows every hole of the pool, and, fight as it may, the game fish cannot shake him off. He mechanically leads the fish in the darkness, and can hardly discern it even as he takes it off the hook. At the coming of day, his creel is full of beautiful fish, every one of which has tried his skill but has eventually come to his basket. If the fish have run early, this fine sport sometimes lasts for a couple of months, and for the salmon or trout fisher it finishes the season.

It requires a practical fisherman to at once detect the sea trout. Speaking generally, it resembles its cousin the brown brook trout, except that one is done in bluish silver and the other in brown and gold. The water in which it happens to be for the time being has much influence upon its colour, and the silvery sea fish becomes more like the trout in proportion as it stays in fresh water. The white trout, which run in autumn, range from half-a-pound to three, four, and five pounds in weight, fish exceeding this being uncommon. The food of this species varies considerably, according to haunt and season. In the sea it is an omnivorous feeder, and is particularly fond of small crustaceæ, sand-hoppers, and other marine creatures. As it approaches the estuaries of rivers, its food becomes more general, and when it enters them the winged water-flies constitute almost its sole diet.

Another member of the salmonidæ is the bull trout, said to be a species by some, by others only a variety. It is found in many rivers common to salmon and sea trout, and is fairly abundant in most British salmon rivers. Its specific distinctions vary greatly with local conditions, so much so sometimes as almost to make it past recognition. 'Grey trout' is one of its provincial names, 'round tail' another, and on the north-east coast it is known as the 'scurf.' So much does the bull-trout resemble the true salmon in appearance that, after the tail has been clipped square, it is sold as such. This resemblance between the two species extends to haunt and habit, food, spawning, and migration. The bull trout attains to a considerable weight; and just as the fish is in good condition or otherwise, so its flesh is pink or yellowish white. As a game fish it affords capital sport, and fights as vigorously as the salmon or brown trout.

Of all fresh-water fishes the brown brook-trout is the one best loved by the angler. Salmon, trout, and grayling are the aristo-

crats of the waters, and constitute the game fishes of Britain. The rivers and streams which they haunt lead us to the finest and wildest scenery, for only the pure sparkling waters are congenial to them. Every one loves running water, and there is a strange fascination about it difficult to define. Men direct their roads by the waterways, and for reasons far other than those of trade and commerce. Only the angler fully knows what these reasons are, and he it is who sees a hundred sights and hears a hundred sounds which are hidden from the traveller on the dusty highway. Flogging the trout streams in spring is surely the most fascinating pastime in which man may indulge, and truly blessed is he who has the opportunity. The trout-fisher cannot but be a minute philosopher—'he must, he is, he cannot but be wise.' This is how Shakespeare described his Antiquary; and has not the author of 'I Go A-fishing' taught us that there is much in common between the angler and the antiquary? How shall we look at the trout, how review his history; and how, further, forge some description of that 'cold, sweet, silvery life, wrapped in round waves, and quickened with touches of transporting fear'?

Of late years it has been our duty to patiently watch and study the fish on their spawning beds; and if ever trout streams are more interesting than when the March-brown and the May-fly are 'on,' surely it is now. Look where we will, the fish are heading up stream to their spawning grounds. The salmon leaves the teeming seas, and the trout his river reaches, for the tributaries. At this time the fish glide through the deep water with as much eagerness as they rushed down the same river as silvery samlets or tiny trout. Maybe they will stay at some well-remembered pool; but the first frosts remind them that they must seek the shallower waters. A brown spate rolling down is another potent reminder, as they know that by its aid rocks and weirs will be more easily crossed. If their accustomed water-ways are of solid foam, they get up easily; but soft spray gives them little hold. We must surmount all obstacles, however, and hurry on to the bright brooks and pebbly shallows.

It is interesting to watch the fish settle down to their domestic duties; and now much of their ordinary watchfulness seems to leave them. Although this facilitates observation, it also assists the fish poacher in his nefarious task. When the female trout has scooped out a hole with her snout, she deposits the eggs at intervals in the sand. Whilst this is proceeding, with what care

and attention her lord attends her! See how he rises and falls, now passing over, now under, and settling first upon this side, then upon that. Observe, too, how he drives off the young and unfertile fish which are ever lying in wait to devour the spawn. When the 'milt' has been fertilised, the whole is covered over, there to remain till the eggs are hatched. The quantity of spawn deposited is such as to suggest that nothing which man could do would have any appreciable influence; and this is more readily understood when it is known that a trout deposits one thousand eggs, and a salmon upwards of nine hundred, for every pound of their live weight. In this connection, however, a vast number of enemies have to be taken into account. A single ill-timed spate will destroy millions of eggs by tearing them from the gravel, and a whole host of aquatic enemies have to be reckoned with; and this, it must be borne in mind, before the fish are hatched. The swan alone is able to destroy a gallon of spawn a day, and it is aided by other aquatic birds.

The process of hatching is long, but ultimately the eggs hatch into alevins. These at first lurk in any quiet retreat, though as soon as the yolk-sac is absorbed they begin to feed, and are termed 'fry.' Until this period they derive their nutriment from the yolk, and absorb only as much oxygen as will support life. The fry sink into the sheltering gravel, get under little rests, and only venture out as they see the tiniest bits of animal food floating down. If the embryo troutlets had enemies whilst still in the egg, they have more now. Fry afford delicate morsels to predatory water insects, to grebes, ducks, kingfishers, herons, and to every mature fish that haunts the stream. These have all to be reckoned with, and the fry have a hard time of it. By this time they have attained to an inch in length, and are daily better able to look after themselves. As they awake to their active summer life the troutlets find themselves far up the tributaries; and here they will remain until they descend to the main waters. This will be in from ten to sixteen months.

When they have dropped down to the great river they are chary of venturing far out into the world of waters, but for a time haunt the gravel beds, preferring those with little bays and eddies. The pebbly reaches afford them the greatest protection; and the more thickly grown are the banks with brambles and cresses the better. The first bring food; the second afford protection. Fry are usually found in about four inches of water, and the tendency

is for the fish to get into deeper conditions as they increase in age and size. They always exhibit sufficient instinct, however, to remain near those spots which enable them to get into quiet eddies, so as not to be swept away by the rushing waters. When the fish descend the streams they have attained to three or four inches in length, and are known as 'yearlings.' This is a generally descriptive term, though not always accurate. The troutlets have now attained to a stage when they can begin the battle of life, and although they have fewer they have larger enemies. Herons destroy quantities of yearlings; pike consume great numbers; and we have seen a pair of kingfishers feeding their newly-fledged young upon them. Otters do but little harm to trout at this stage, preferring, as they pass up the shallow streams, the abundant fresh-water crayfish.

At this stage of their growth troutlings are exceedingly interesting; and probably every angler has watched them in early summer, when myriads of black gnats revolve just over the water, gambolling in the most frolicsome fashion. At the end of two seasons the young trout have increased to six or eight inches, and at this stage the angler first becomes acquainted with them. Like smelt, they are exceedingly troublesome. The progression from troutlet to trout may be said to take place from the second spring to the end of summer. The fish, which has now attained to half a pound in weight, feeds on the various members of the Ephemera, grows rapidly, and shakes off its enemies. And now, having followed the troutlet from egg to fuller life, we must go back for a moment to the fish that produced it. When trout are spawning but little food is taken, and that from the bottom. As the fish leave the 'redds,' they are lean and lank, more nearly resembling a pike than a trout. In an ordinary season, the fish are all off the redds by December.

It is not until March that trout leave their dark retreats and begin to feed on the surface flies that the first fine days find upon the stream. If the season is open, food is abundant, though the fish rise only for an hour or so in the middle of the day. Every month brings its own peculiar insect host, and the trout angler, observing these, dresses his flies accordingly. The different nature of rivers influences not only the supply of insect food but the fish. The trout of slow, southern streams grow quicker and heavier than those of the colder northern ones. Speaking generally, the small-winged flies are taken during the day, the larger-winged ones at

night. The trout, like other fish and some birds, does not swallow its insect food until a considerable pellet has been collected in the mouth. The weather influences the distribution of fish in a river, especially trout. And this remark applies to the different heights of the water. A good trout angler always knows just where to find his game, not only as to season, but as to wind and weather. In the cold of winter, so in summer, the fish are found in the deep dubs, and a favourite haunt in spring and summer is upon the 'draws' and rippling reaches. At flood time the fish are driven to the stream sides, worms and food being washed there; and then they have an aversion to be in rushing, turbulent, or muddy water. Of course, trout are found in tarns, ponds, lochs, as well as in rivers; but the latter they love and thrive in best. Every one knows what a handsome fish the pink-spotted trout is, and also that it greatly varies in colour. Trout have the power to take on themselves the colour of the stream which they haunt, and no fresh-water fish conforms more admirably to its environment. This is one of the most remarkable traits in the fish's economy. Other local conditions greatly affect the species. Those in lakes attain to a considerable size, and their predatory instincts are greatly developed. The fact of trout interbreeding with salmon has been already mentioned, as has also the fact of the fertility of the produce. Trout are subject to the same devastating disease as salmon, and of late years several of the best trout streams in the country have been almost depopulated by its agency.

KAIKAI.

KAIKAI was my first case, and I owe him a debt of gratitude that cannot be repaid by this paltry attempt to rescue his memory from immediate oblivion, for he imparted to the early months of my official career a liveliness that outweighed the discomfort of exile in an out-district. When we first met, a few days after my arrival on the scene of my labours, I was fresh from England, ignorant of the language and customs of the people I had been sent to manage; and the guardianship of Kaikai was a liberal education in itself. He laid the foundation of all the knowledge I ever acquired about his people, and the physical geography I learned while I was running after him lasted me my stay in the country. He was a great untameable soul, a Prometheus unbound, that would have left his mark upon the valley history if he had lived a generation earlier.

Kaikai was born of poor but disreputable parents: his father was the hereditary priest of the heathen temple of Singatoka. For generations his fathers had been the medium of intercourse between the people and their gods—between the living and the spirits of their dead ancestors. They used to sit at the door of the thatched temple, and receive the offering made to the god. In return they used to shiver and foam at the mouth, and declare the oracle in a squeaky falsetto. When thus possessed they pulled the wires of the tribal policy. The utterances of the gods by their mouths being in singular accordance with the interests of the aristocracy, the chiefs in their turn were pious and regular in the matter of offerings. Almost daily, pigs, with their hind legs broken to prevent them from straying, were turned loose in the sacred grove, and Kaikai's fathers waxed in substance. In the course of nature Kaikai would have succeeded to the sacred office, and this truthful history would never have been written, for of all human institutions the priesthood in Singatoka seemed the most necessary and the most permanent, and in none of the last old priest's inspired prophecies was there any hint that doom was about to fall upon his office. Yet so it was.

Before the old man died there had been the war, and the foreigner had come, allied with the men from the eastward, all

mad with blind and impious rage against the gods, and had burned the temple, and had taught the people—aye! even the elders of them—to howl empty songs after the foreign fashion to the white man's god, and to do other foolishness with money and a basin. So when Kikai grew to manhood, full of the craft and subtlety of his fathers, but with his fathers' occupation gone, he naturally fell to hen-stealing, and thus it was we met.

My first case called for no complicated sifting of evidence, for Kikai pleaded guilty to having stolen two turkeys belonging to a storekeeper. He even admitted, when pressed upon the point, that he had been three times convicted for a similar offence—that he was, in fact, a hardened stealer of hens, as my native police-sergeant alleged. 'He was our heathen priest, sir, and that, perhaps, is why he is a hen-stealer!' Clearly, the prison had no terrors for Kikai, and so, though I am no lover of the lash, I sentenced him as a 'rogue and vagabond' to an aggregate sentence of two months with a whipping of ten lashes. He was removed before he recovered from his surprise, and I could see the glint of the scissors as the police sheared his head to the scalp on the doorstep of the courthouse. After court he sent a message that he wanted to see me. I met him at the door of the police-quarters—a powerful, thick-set man, a shade darker than his fellows, with eyes set deep and far apart in his head, a broad forehead, and square, resolute jaw; altogether he had a more intellectual head and face than any other Singatoka I had seen. He was perfectly respectful, but he spoke as a man who is conscious that the demand he is about to make is reasonable and well within his rights.

'I have heard, sir, that you ordered me to be beaten'—(the interpreter conducted the dialogue). 'It is my wish that you change your order. Imprisonment is nothing to me, but I cannot undergo a beating. How would it be if I laboured twice as long in prison instead of being beaten?'

I pointed out that the sentence of the court once pronounced was as immutable as the courses of the stars, but he begged me to believe that the matter was capable of argument.

'I will endure a year—two years, even—working in the prison, but a beating I cannot endure; and I fear, sir, that unless the sentence is altered I may run away, for beating is not good for me.'

The penalties of breaking gaol were sternly explained to him, and he was removed in custody.

There was no lock-up. The whole station had cost the Government only 30%, and the money had all been sunk in grass huts, leaving nothing over for doors. The only building with a door within a radius of ten miles was my storehouse. That certainly had a door with a padlock; but to incarcerate Kaikai among my tinned meats and beer would be worse than shutting up a fox in a henroost. The prisoners of the provincial gaol hard by slept in the prison shed or not, as they liked, and worked out their punishment by catching fish for the ladies of the Roko's kitchen. For a prisoner resolved upon escape, such a place of confinement was obviously inadequate. To Suva gaol, five days distant by land or water, must Kaikai be sent for punishment, and he must be kept somehow until an opportunity for sending him arose. I made my native sergeant responsible for him that night, and went to bed.

In the morning he was gone. It was no time for idle re-crimination. The sergeant had slept at his side; in the morning he awoke and found himself alone, and a pair of broken handcuffs were picked up in the station square. That was all. But he (the sergeant) asked only for one man and a rope, and upon his head would it be if he did not bring him back before sunset.

In the silent hour between the trade wind and the land breeze, while there was still light enough to see a screw-pine against the grey sky, Kaikai was again before me. In his dusky features I thought I read a calm determination that recked nothing of such trifling checks as a re-capture, but this might have been the effect of the failing light. The sergeant and his satellite had beat the country-side until, towards evening, they found a lonely pool inviting them to bathe. There was something splashing in the water, and they crept up softly to reconnoitre. It was Kaikai, disporting his burly limbs in the bath and blowing like a grampus. Between them and him lay his clothes, and the bone of a stolen ham that had been his mid-day meal. The pursuers captured his loin-cloth, and hid themselves to await developments. When Kaikai came out to dress there followed a scene that I shall not attempt to describe, and two clothed policemen might have been seen speeding over the hills in pursuit of a naked fugitive. Then the sergeant, whose wind was impaired by the ease and comfort of official life, cunningly bridged the increasing interval between pursuers and pursued with his throwing-club, and Kaikai bit the dust. He bowed to the force of circumstances, and allowed

himself to be bound and led back without opposition. He spent the night handcuffed on either side to a policeman, and in the morning he was led to judgment for breaking his confinement. He addressed the court with calm dignity. It was true! but there was a cause. It was the beating—a form of punishment to which he could never submit. Let the magistrate be fair-minded, and exchange the beating for a year's imprisonment, and he would never escape. Otherwise, it might occur again. He was led back with an augmented penalty, never again to be uncoupled from his policeman till put on board a vessel bound for Suva.

For two whole days he stayed while I strove in vain to charter a cutter to take him to the capital. On the third he took his policeman with him to bathe. As they stood on the brink of the stream, Kaikai condoled with his guardian on the cruel necessity that forced him to enter the cold water when he might be enjoying a cigarette on the bank. 'It was nothing to him (Kaikai), of course, but he could not help pitying the discomfort of a gentlemanly policeman who was bound eternally to a lowborn convict like twins of a birth, when with the turn of a key he might have rest combined with security. But this young magistrate treated his police like children, pretending that he could not trust them.' So shrewdly did he play upon the man's vanity that the key was turned, and the end of the handcuffs transferred to the prisoner's other wrist. To the connecting chain the policeman fastened a rope, and tied the free end securely to a tree. Then he went a bare five paces to fetch a dry banana leaf for a tobacco-wrapper. When he came back the rope was lying in the water. Had Kaikai drowned himself? Panic-stricken, he jerked the end, and it came up empty. Kaikai had vanished. The wretched policeman rushed off in vain pursuit, imploring his absent friend to return and all would be forgiven. On a rock hard by he found the handcuffs battered and broken.

For the next ten days Kaikai was at large. I heard of him occasionally as frequenting his village at nights and spending the day somewhere in the bush, but the police could never find him because rumours had reached them that he went about armed with a mission axe, and thirsted for policemen's blood. One night a messenger came to tell me a weighty secret. Kaikai was asleep in a certain house in Singatoka, and might be betrayed if a Jael could be found. My sergeant, when consulted, thought that a Judas would be better, and cheerfully offered himself for the post,

Taking with him a friend, who, he assured me, was cursed with an exuberance of personal courage that he had been trying for years to discharge, he went off with a pair of handcuffs and a candle-end, and a short club concealed in the back of his shirt. The unconscious Kaikai awoke as they went in, but they soothed him with soft speeches, telling him how strongly they approved of his attitude in the matter of flogging, and reprobated the whole bench of magistrates to which I was the newest and least promising addition. Then they all three swore blood-brotherhood and went to sleep. In the morning Kaikai awoke, stretched himself, cleared his throat, girt his sulu round him, and moved towards the door. The sergeant and his courageous friend, who had been shamming sleep, were before him, and barred the door with their bodies. Kaikai took in the situation without emotion. He simply reached for his axe that was stuck in the thatch, and swung it above his head, saying, 'Out of the way, both of you!' Then he walked out, and the sergeant and his bold friend were found some time afterwards among the bananas, looking, so they said, for Kaikai—at least, this was the account of a bystander; the sergeant's story was different.

Thenceforward the fugitive became bolder. He even took his meals in the village, and thus again he fell into my hands. Before breakfast one morning a spy came breathless to whisper that Kaikai was eating in the Buli's house five miles distant. In three minutes I was trotting along with handcuffs and a tether-rope jingling from the dees of my saddle, and an active young policeman running at my stirrup. We stopped outside the village to reconnoitre, unobserved of any but the pigs, and my spy walked boldly into the house as if he had come to share the meal. In a few moments he came back to say that Kaikai was eating yams close to the back door, and that our only chance was for me to ride to the front door at full gallop while the policeman embarrassed his escape from the rear. I moved my mare among the houses until I could see a bullet head in the vista of the two doorways of the house two hundred yards away. I rammed in the spurs and scattered the pigs on the *rara* at a hard gallop. I flung myself from the saddle and through the door almost with the same motion, leaving my mare to bolt for home or eat the banana shoots as she liked. My man was half out of the back-door with his mouth full of yam, but here he met my ally, and in his momentary hesitation I got my arms round his greasy neck. He grunted,

spat the yam at the policeman, and fell to yelling at the top of his voice. He was strong, but I had my knees against the lintels of the door, and so I got him down on his back on the mats, and he surrendered. We apologised to our hosts for disturbing their breakfast, and formed a homeward procession followed by all the naked children in the village and half the pigs. Kaikai led the cortège, handcuffed with his hands behind him and fastened to my saddle with a rope. His anxiety about the teeth of the fierce beast that snorted so close to his bare shoulders evidently drove out for a time all thoughts of escape.

It was no use waiting any longer for a passing vessel. Until Kaikai could be lodged safely in Suva Gaol I should know no rest. Besides, after this last capture he was resigned almost to penitence, and he was scarcely more likely to escape when travelling along the coast under escort than when living in a grass hut on the station. He was brought up and warned that any further attempt to escape would simply increase his punishment, to which he answered sadly, 'It is true!' as who should say, 'Would that I had realised it long ago!' Two policemen were picked for the escort—the one for his intelligence and the other for his muscle—and Mind was given authority over Matter. Kaikai was led out handcuffed and roped to the escort, who undertook to land him safely in Suva on the fifth day. They set out full of high hope, full of confidence in themselves and in each other. Alas! that such enthusiasm should have been so rudely dashed! Six miles out they came to the river Singatoka, and demanded a canoe in accordance with their instructions. Every dug-out capable of floating was up the river for a festival, and if they waited for a canoe they must wait for two days. The swim was nothing for a Fijian—a paltry half-mile—but it was clear that Kaikai could not swim with comfort in handcuffs. Mind accordingly unlocked them, tied one end of the rope round Kaikai's neck, and gave the other to Muscle to hold between his teeth. For the first hundred yards or so they swam side by side; then Kaikai began to forge ahead. As he turned round to encourage his escort his face suddenly froze with horror, and he shouted 'A Ngio! A Ngio!' ('A shark! A shark!'). Neither Mind nor Muscle stopped to look; they dropped the rope and swam for their lives. Kaikai did the same, and to swim the faster he undid the rope from his neck. It was then seen how much faster than his escort he could swim, and when he waded ashore his guards were still

striking out in mid-stream. He even found time to wish them farewell before plunging into the bush. As he knew every inch of the country and his escort did not it was useless to pursue, and Mind decided upon retreat to the station. That night the criers proclaimed through the villages a reward for the body of Kaikai, and the people muttered remarks disrespectful to a Government that couldn't keep a prisoner when they had got him. Feeling themselves absolved from any obligation to help the authorities, they fed Kaikai and made life pleasant to him; and thus it might have been till now had not the 'young man's fancy lightly turned to thoughts of love.' The beloved object was not unappropriated, and the husband, returning from his plantation in the evening, thought that sympathy with misfortune could be perfectly genuine without embraces. Revenge, too, in this case would be not only sweet but profitable. He took two trusty friends into his confidence, and lay in wait in the path along which Kaikai was wont to go to his assignation. They leaped upon him, bearing him down with their united weight, and carried him bound into the village. There they divided the blood-money between them at the rate of six and eightpence apiece. That night I chartered and victualled a cutter, and in the early dawn Kaikai was taken on board and manacled to a stout ring-bolt in the deck. When I had satisfied myself as to the strength of the fastenings, I pocketed the key and went on shore; they might loose him as they pleased in Suva, but on the voyage at least he would touch the soft hearts of his guards in vain. A week later I was given the gaoler's receipt for the body of Kaikai testifying to the interesting fact that he was 'sober' when he was delivered to him, and I slept that night in calm security, for doubtless by that time the flogging to which Kaikai had so deeply rooted an antipathy had been impartially administered.

That was on a Tuesday. On Wednesday morning at breakfast-time my usually stolid sergeant ran in with evil tidings bursting out of every pore. 'Sir,' he cried, 'I have just seen Kaikai dressed in the habit of a local preacher!' I was too much startled even to think of the Society for Psychical Research. Had Kaikai sent his spirit to impersonate him in order to complete my discomfiture? But the sergeant scouted the idea of supernatural agency. It was Kaikai in the flesh that he had seen, wanting only a book of devotions to complete his clerical attire. He had cheerfully wished the sergeant good morning, and seemed to be at peace

with all the world. The sergeant's sense of the decencies had been so outraged that he had not stopped to question him; and therefore, until Kaikai could be interviewed or next mail arrive from Suva, his miraculous escape must remain a mystery.

Further tidings followed hard on the heels of the sergeant. The villagers had made a feast to Kaikai, and the maidens had danced in his honour. He was friendly to all, but a little supercilious, as befits one who is on the high road to be a national hero. Not until three bowls of yankona had loosened his tongue-strings did he vouchsafe an explanation of his re-appearance. He had enjoyed the hospitality of the Colonial Government for one night only. On the morrow he was ordered to fall in with the road gang. Even this he did, being in all respects conciliatory; but when they came to serve out pickaxes and shovels he felt that he had been humbled enough. They had told him, moreover, that a tail or two was wanting from the cat, and that he must wait a day while they plaited new ones before his cup should be full. So, in the face of the whole gang, warders and all, he said, 'Forgive me, but I am going,' cleared the stone wall at the back of the jail, disappeared into the forest, and stopped to listen to his pursuers. They were running straight up the hill in the thick bush—almost abreast of him indeed—and they would probably run like that till they reached the Waimanu road. In the meantime his sulu did him no credit. It was dirty, and had S. G. conspicuously branded across the breech. He must have a new outfit before starting on his travels. So he ran downhill towards the town, skirting the Polynesian settlement, dropped into the road at Nambukulou, walked briskly past two policemen, and made for the store of an Indian. The Indian had a pigtail and no calves to his legs, and was even in other respects altogether contemptible; but there were sulus and shirts hanging in his doorway far too good to be the property of any Indian, pigtailed or no.

It chanced that this Indian was transacting a matter of business with a neighbour in mid-street—probably the neighbour owed him money—at any rate, they were both shouting and gesticulating to each other in the middle of a crowd, so Kaikai unobtrusively took down a white shirt and sulu, and reached to the counter for a black satin tie such as the local preachers use. Then he went back into the bush to dress, and listened for the Indians when they should find out what he had done. As a local preacher, Kaikai scarcely knew himself. He felt at once that he

had mistaken his vocation. The stiff front seemed to tap all the sources of the pent-up eloquence of a heathen priest. That, of course, was what he had been bred for before the luckless turn of the wheel made him a hen-stealer. But this was no time for moralising. He walked boldly now to Walu Bay, passing on the way a gaol-warder running to Suva with the news of his escape. In Walu Bay there was a canoe belonging to a native minister from the other side who had gone into town to buy a bottle of kerosine for the Sabbath. There is, as Kaikai knew, a community of property among ministers of the Gospel, and Kaikai as local preacher was in far greater need of the canoe than was its owner. So he took it and paddled himself out into the harbour. As he rested on his paddle the shouts of his pursuers sounded from the hillside musically in his ears. He landed near Namuka Island, ungratefully kicked the canoe out into the current, and started on his forlorn tramp. It was almost a royal progress. At each village he told a different story, paltering, alas, with the sacred truth, but improving so artistically with each narration that at the end he had almost come to believe it himself. The usual official notice offering a reward for the apprehension of an escaped prisoner, medium height, powerful frame, short hair, dark skin, tatooed with 'A. A.' on the right forearm, proved the truth of the first part of the story, and a lacrimose Indian and the pieces of a broken canoe gave some colour to the latter portion; but, for the rest, it must be remembered that Kaikai was by heredity a liar. To the elders of his native village Kaikai spoke of me without animus, as of one to whom respect was due but whose duties lay in a different sphere from his. 'It no longer concerns the magistrate. It is their affair in Suva. He has done with me; therefore, what reason should I have to fear him.' Next morning, for the sixth time, I found myself on Kaikai's trail. The promise of a reward brought many volunteers. We surrounded the village, and went into the house and captured him in all his finery, without the shadow of resistance. He was surprised, of course, but not cast down. The flogging had now come to seem so far off that imprisonment had lost its terrors for him. Again he was conveyed to the capital, chained to a ring-bolt in the deck of a cutter. Again I breathed freely, taking comfort to myself that I had posted to the jailer a gentle sarcasm upon the security of his arrangements. Three weeks passed; my duties took me through Nandronga to Fort Carnarvan in the mountains. One evening as

I went the rounds I heard the word 'Kaikai' in the babble of conversation in one of the barrack houses. Was the word an adjective or a proper name?¹ I called out the corporal and asked him. He looked like a man who would fain not betray a confidence; but, when I pressed him, he said reluctantly that Kaikai had been seen on the road below the fort that evening, dressed in the uniform of a soldier. So he was out again. This time, at least, I would wash my hands of him. Two of the men had met him in the road, and recognised him. He told them he was carrying a message to me from the magistrate on the Rewa. But when they offered to conduct him to my presence he would fain be excused, giving a variety of reasons for putting off the interview. He had undergone his flogging, and had even worked some weeks in the road gang; but he found the life irksome, and he left it. This time he stole a new sulu, and exchanged it with a Polynesian for an old one, vandyked round the bottom like the uniform of the armed constabulary. Then he stole a turkey-red cummerbund, and he would even have stolen a uniform belt if he had had time. As it was, he put on the largest turban he could find, and took to the bush as he was. On the first day he reached the Rewa station, walked boldly into the magistrate's house, saluted, and stood at attention. He was under orders, he said, to carry despatches to Fort Carnarvan. His despatches? He regretted to say that he had lost them in swimming the river. His belt? That, too, had been swept away by the flood. The *locum tenens* at Rewa, who liked not the insolent ways of the gay and licentious soldiery, bade him begone, and the journey from the station to the fort across the mountains had taken him two days.

I was tired of Kaikai. He had become monotonous, and I pursued him no more. I heard afterwards that he was caught, and made to serve out his time; but I was transferred to another district, and saw nothing of him for two years.

Long afterwards, when I was in Suva, a boat pulled up from Navua with the mangled, but still living body of a native burglar. A store had been set on fire and broken into, and the European store-keeper roughly handled. The contents had been looted and the burglars had got safe away; but the native police discovered the culprits, and succeeded in arresting all but one. That one eluded arrest for several days, but at last the pursuers came upon him in the bush, and, because he would not surrender, had

¹ In the local dialect *Kaikai* means 'strong.'

brought him down with throwing-clubs and battered his helpless body as he lay upon the ground. Then they brought him to the hospital to be mended.

The other four culprits were tried, and, before sentence, were asked by the court whether they had anything to say in extenuation. 'Sir,' said their spokesman, 'the root of this matter was Kaikai. He seduced us to do this thing. We therefore are innocent. It was on this wise. Kaikai came into our house in the evening and said, "Erone, let us have prayers." So we had prayers. Then Kaikai said, "How would it be to go and break open the white man's store?" And we said, "It is well." So we went to the store, and when we came near, Kaikai said, "How would it be to set the store on fire, and then perhaps the white man will come out?" So we set the store on fire, and presently the white man did come out. Then Kaikai said, "Let us trample on him." So we trampled him under foot, and then we took his box of money and ran towards the river, and when we came to the river, as the box was so heavy, Kaikai dropped it in'—it was afterwards found there—and then we all went home.'

'And what did you do then?' asked the court.

'Kaikai read prayers.'

There was no hope for Kaikai. His arm was broken, his thigh-bone smashed in two places, and his skull fractured, and all this had been done four days before he reached the hospital. It was so extraordinary a case of vitality that, when I heard of it, not knowing who the patient was, I went to see him, and in the wretched remains of humanity, strapped up and bandaged almost beyond recognition, I saw and knew the features of Kaikai. He was wasted to skin and bone, poor fellow, and weakening every hour; but he was conscious and recognised me, and I think was pleased that I, with whom the earlier stages of his career had been so much bound up, should have come to see him in the last. He lived four days, and was buried in the hospital cemetery, and I was just too late to attend his funeral as chief mourner. And so, when his companions in guilt came to be sentenced, they suffered alone, for Kaikai, who had seduced them, had gone to stand before another tribunal, where, I think, hereditary tendencies and personal bravery must count for something.

EXILE.

WHEN day's long course of toil is done,
 Before the rest of night,
 I stand to watch the setting sun
 Drop slowly out of sight.

Then in the clouds I love to trace
 The forms of hill and plain,
 And think I see my native place,
 My distant home again.

I love the wind that blows from thence
 With news I long to hear ;
 I love the wind that blows from hence,
 My greeting oft to bear.

Across the silent deep blue skies
 Seek out my home, O breeze !
 Beyond the seven hills it lies,
 Beyond the seven seas.

How blue those heaving seas and deep,
 How high those parting hills,
 The sunbeams on their green crests sleep,
 Their vales the shadow fills.

O land of youth, O vanished land,
 I seek a distant shore,
 And can I ever hope to stand
 Upon thy mountains more ?

Or in that country where I go,
 My weary wanderings past,
 Shall I look round about, and know
 My native home at last ?

AN EVENING CHAT IN JAMAICA.

OF all seas the Caribbean has no foolish flatterers. And our passengers (though having nearly all travelled up from Peru, or further Chili, we thought ourselves well seasoned) for the most part had small appetites and feigned sleep.

Said one, 'It has four distinct motions; a pitch and toss, a roll, and a wriggle!'

'You are all hard to please. Look at it blue and rippling. It is behaving as prettily as it can,' returned the Captain. He wore a twinkling smile, a white suit, and a straw hat set jauntily on one side of his head. Then aside to the lady who sat on his right hand at meals—

'Why on earth are they all reading "The English in the West Indies?"'

'It is Froude's Gospel of Jamaica to most of us. We want to get some ideas beforehand.'

'Don't quote his opinions to the planters unless you want to raise a storm during your stay. Froude looks on everything from the blackest point of view. He seems to have met one disappointed individual whose lamentations he chronicles word for word. Now I, who have sailed here for years, think Jamaica quite a rich little island. Look at her monopolies of exports; her rum, logwood, pimento—the fruit trade with the States. Of course her old days of prosperity are gone by, I grant you.'

'For the matter of that, one hears something about depression even in England. In India too; while as to trade in Chili and Peru, where I have just been staying, it is growing more difficult every day for the English to gain a livelihood.'

'Exactly so. They might be worse off here. Well, I must leave you now, and see about taking the ship safely into Kingston. Try to see and hear several sides of the question if you can. You will soon get the celebrated first sight of the Blue Mountains and the harbour, which roused "Tom Cringle," Froude, and other travellers to such a height of enthusiasm.'

Jamaica indeed loomed high and blue to starboard: the sea lulled to a dead calm. Ahead lay the once famous hell haunt of buccaneers and blood-boats, Port Royal; now sunk by its great

earthquake to a low green landspit and a handful of houses. Behind these, Kingston gleamed white against a background of dark mountain bases and low rolling clouds. Suddenly a swift tropical shower blurred the view and drenched the decks clear of all idlers. Later, my first impression of Jamaica was a dripping jumble of palm trees, ships' bowsprits, and Kingston houses, mixed up among black coal mounds.

By good luck, the Captain's parting counsel became a possibility. It appeared that the Acting Governor was awaiting my arrival to offer a delightful hospitality, but expected me, through some mistake, to arrive from North America. Not knowing this at first, I drove straight on landing to a quiet hotel frequented more by island families than winter visitors. Here for two days it rained—torrents!

The graceful bamboos were all a-rustle, and the gorgeous pink and crimson flowers, hibiscus, poinsettias, and corallines were drenched, while the tortured palm trees bowed their crowned heads, uselessly trying to escape from the lashing wind. This was in October, the rainy month, it should be explained.

Two nights while our cane "rockers" tapped rhythmically the polished floor, bare for sake of coolness, and while the warm rain streamed incessantly down before the open windows from black darkness, sat opposite groups engaged in talk upon one subject. They were inquirers and informants, new-comers and planters.

The former spoke little but to ask questions. The latter only ceased talk to light up for a fresh smoke, that kept mosquitoes off, except the most virulent.

Weather-bound were the said planters. For after coming down from their estates in the hills to shop and sleep in town, the rain proved too violent next day to be faced. Worse still, by evening came messages passed on by wire and telephone that two rivers were swollen and impassable. Bridges in Jamaica are few and low, and in the case of one of these luckless individuals of little use, as his road obliged him to drive his buggy and horses along the sea-coast past the wide mouths of two rivers. This calls to one's mind the Jamaican proverb, 'No call alligator longmouth till you pass him.'

Speaking of sugar in the island, this planter told me that the estates are small and the machinery very poor in Jamaica, compared with the great cane-fields and mills I had lately seen in Peru.

'But still we get along—and manage to make a small profit. Rum is the one thing in which no place can excel Jamaica. And a strange thing about it is, that one big estate will produce only common stuff while a little one close by may be making the very finest spirit possible, at six, seven, or eight shillings a gallon. The cause seems to be from some difference in the soil. But what that is, no man can say. And here a planter has to be his own engineer and chemist, if he wants to succeed.

'As to the cane plants themselves, we cannot irrigate them at will and so bring them to the perfection that is gained in Peru. Still they do well, and in some gullies where surface soil is washed down from the surrounding higher ground, the canes have not been replanted within living memory. Again, other large estates always need to be fresh planted after the second cut.

'A great pest of the cane-fields here is a plant called cow-itch. This is somewhat like the scarlet runner, and it sheds from the outside of its pods a down that causes acute pain. Should cow-itch infest a patch of cane, this brake must be burned to prevent the mischief spreading widely afield.

'One day,' said our informant, 'I was riding through my fields and complained to a negress that one corner was not sufficiently cleared of the loose leaves. She told me, "Too much cow-itch in it." Not believing her, I got down from my horse and lifted some of the leaves myself. Heugh! how they stung! I could hardly keep from showing the pain, so mounted again and rode away without a word. But when I had got once out of sight, down I jumped pretty sharp and rubbed my hand well with earth.'

This gentleman also told me something of the chinchona growth which has been fostered here recently by Government. It is known better under the form of quinine at home, and is a comparatively new attempt, which so far has been only a failure.

'What of sessel hemp, which has also lately been introduced into the island?' I queried.

'I fear our soil is too rich for it,' said the planter, thoughtfully. 'My own experience is that the sessel hemp thrives best on very poor land; just as does our big aloë, here called "May-pole" by the people, because on May-day their grandsires and grandams used to dance around it.'

But after all, judging from what this planter and several others told me, whatever crops are under discussion, whether pimento, logwood, or bananas and oranges, coffee remains the finest present

product of Jamaica. For the Blue Mountain and the Peaberry kinds—the latter being the finer of the two—have no equals, perhaps even in Mocha. They are bought up a year before grown for the Liverpool market, and are here supposed to be all intended for Russia.

The Peaberry derives its name from an apparent freak of nature, one round pea instead of twin seeds being found within the coffee berry, and containing a double flavour. These single berries, or peas, are hand-picked from out of the general mass. Some of the best coffee plantations are said to be quite small, but situated in favoured gullies in the hills where the soil is extremely rich, being an alluvial deposit brought down by streams and winter torrents. As with canes, so with the coffee. Many of the latter grounds need replanting after sixteen years. But the Blue Mountain trees are famous for being perhaps sixty years of age.

‘Coffee growing exhausts the soil so utterly that the land must lie fallow afterwards,’ explained our Gamaliel. “The saltpetre has got into the coffee, sah,” is the niggers’ favourite expression when they pull up a tree to show you that it is rotten at the roots. Now considering that there is no saltpetre in the whole island, how and whence they ever got their idea of its qualities is a mystery to me.’

The process of preparing coffee berries for market was now briefly explained to me by this kind acquaintance. When gathered, red and round as cherries, the berries are subjected to the only machine used throughout in the work. This is not unlike a nutmeg-grater, or graters, which free the twin beans inside the berry from their fleshy covering, leaving them clean and blue. They are then sun-dried, and on the best plantations this is done by spreading them on barbecues, or cement terraces, sloped so as to allow rain to run off quickly, having gutters all around and one raised place in the middle. The beans are raked constantly to expose all of them in turn to the sun; but should there be any signs of rain coming over the sky, the whole crop is gathered with haste into a heap in the raised centre, and a shelter-house on wheels is drawn over them while the bad weather lasts. Last of all, the berries are hand-picked with care, and the finest are put aside.

‘Labour is at present the great drawback of our island,’ ended the planter. ‘See what thousands of acres are lying waste in the mountains! I don’t blame Quashey for sneaking off high up there

and settling himself down free of any landlord. It's a great temptation instead of having to pay me rent of 1*l.* an acre; though in the latter case if one goes up to measure what he is really cultivating, it turns out to be five or six acres, instead of the two he was at first given.'

'But that seems a rather heavy rent. How can he bring his produce down to Spanish Town, or Kingston, and sell it?'

'On his wife's and childrens' heads; also on jackass-back; last of all on his own. He generally rides up on his ass to his ground of a morning, wife and children filing after him; then the wife works hard, and perhaps he does a little, or else he lies on his back.'

'But you have coolie labour now in Jamaica?'

'Certainly. Without that we could never get on; for it is no longer as in old days when the slaves were concentrated on the estates. Each coolie costs over 16*l.* to the Indian Government, half in passage money coming here, and the rest either for their return journey or as bounty in case they choose to stay after their time is out—but few do. They are very good labourers, and I like the coolies.'

These East Indian coolies are now quite an oriental feature in this West Indian island. A visit to their village at Mona is like being transplanted to the other side of the globe. The coolies are induced to come out here by Government agents, and are indentured for a fixed time; their industrial service in the colony lasting for a term of ten years. In return their employers guarantee them work for six days in the week, at 1*s.* per day for men and 9*d.* for women. Hospitals are provided for them carefully by the Government, and in sickness a coolie receives his half-pay until he is recovered.

Whereupon our talk ended that night. For early hours are necessary in Jamaica, where people rise at six, or often five, to avoid being out later in the great heat of mid-day. Our planter had ordered his buggy and horses even before cockcrow, *at half-past two!* By daylight he trusted to reach his first ford, where, if the river had not fallen, he must needs await its doing so.

THE SOWERS.

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,

AUTHOR OF 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XLI.

DUTY.

It was not now a very cold night. There were fleecy clouds thrown like puffs of smoke against the western sky. The moon, on the wane—a small crescent lying on its back—was lowering towards the horizon. The thermometer had risen since sunset, as it often does in March. There was a suggestion of spring in the air. It seemed that at last the long winter was drawing to a close, that the iron grip of frost was relaxing.

Paul went out and inspected the harness by the light of a stable lantern held in the mittened hand of a yemschick. He had reasons of his own for absenting himself while Catrina bade her mother farewell. He was rather afraid of these women.

The harness inspected, he began reckoning how many hours of moonlight might still be vouchsafed to him. The stableman, seeing the direction of his gaze, began to talk of the weather and the possibilities of snow in the near future. They conversed in low voices together.

Presently the door opened and Catrina came quickly out, followed by a servant carrying a small hand-bag.

Paul could not see Catrina's face. She was veiled, and furred to the eyelids. Without a word the girl took her seat in the sleigh, and the servant prepared the bearskin rugs. Paul gathered up the reins and took his place beside her. A few moments were required to draw up the rugs and fasten them with straps; then Paul gave the word and the horses leapt forward.

As they sped down the avenue Catrina turned and looked her last on Thors.

Before long Paul wheeled into the trackless forest. He had come very carefully, steering chiefly by the moon and stars, with occasional assistance from a bend of the winding river. At times he had taken to the ice, following the course of the stream for a

few miles. No snow had fallen; it would be easy to return on his own track. Through this part of the forest no road was cut.

For nearly half an hour they drove in silence. Only the whistle of the iron-bound runners on the powdery snow, the creak of the warming leather on the horses, the regular breathing of the team, broke the stillness of the forest. Paul hoped against hope that Catrina was asleep. She sat by his side, her arm touching his sleeve, her weight thrown against him at such times as the sleigh bumped over a fallen tree or some inequality of the ground.

He could not help wondering what thoughts there were behind her silence. Steinmetz's good-natured banter had come back to his memory during the last few days in a new light.

'Paul,' said the woman at his side quite suddenly, breaking the silence of the great forest where they had grown to life and sorrow almost side by side.

'Yes.'

'I want to know how this all came about. It is not my father's doing. There is something quick, and practical, and wise which suggests you and Herr Steinmetz. I suspect that you have done this—you and he—for our happiness.'

'No,' answered Paul; 'it was mere accident. Your father heard of our trouble in Kiew. You know him—always impulsive and reckless. He never thinks of the danger. He came to help us.'

Catrina smiled wanly.

'But it is for our happiness, is it not, Paul? You know that it is—that is why you have done it. I have not had time yet to realise what I am doing, all that is going to happen. But if it is your doing, I think I shall be content to abide by the result.'

'It is not my doing,' replied Paul, who did not like her wistful tone. 'It is the outcome of circumstances. Circumstances have been ruling us all lately. We seem to have no time to consider, but only to do that which seems best for the moment.'

'And it is best that I should go to America with my father?' Her voice was composed and quiet. In the dim light he could not see her white lips; indeed, he never looked.

'It seems so to me, undoubtedly,' he said. 'In doing this, so far as we can see at present, it seems certain that you are saving your father from Siberia. You know what he is; he never thinks of his own safety. He ought never to have come here to-night.'

If he remains in Russia it is an absolute certainty that he will sooner or later be re-arrested. He is one of those good people who require saving from themselves.'

Catrina nodded. At times Duty is the keedge-anchor of Happiness. The girl was dimly aware that she was holding to this. She was simple and unsophisticated enough to consider Paul's opinion infallible. At the great cross-roads of life we are apt to ask the way of anybody who happens to be near. Catrina might perhaps have made a worse choice of counsel, for Paul was honest.

'As you put it,' she said, 'it is clearly my duty. There is a sort of consolation in that, however painful it may be at the time. I suppose it is consolatory to look back and think that at all events one did one's duty.'

'I don't know,' answered Paul simply; 'I suppose so.'

Looking back was not included in his method of life, which was rather characterised by a large faith and a forward pressure. Whenever there was question of considering life as an abstract he drew within his shell with a manlike shyness. He had no generalities ready for each emergency.

'Would father have gone alone?' she asked, with a very human thrill of hope in her voice.

'No,' answered Paul steadily, 'I think not. But you can ask him.'

They had never been so distant as they were at this moment—so cold, such mere acquaintances. And they had played together in one nursery.

'Of course, if that is the case,' said the girl, 'my duty is quite clear.'

'It required some persuasion to make him consent to go, even with you,' said Paul.

A rough piece of going—for there was no road—debarred further conversation at this time. The sledge rolled and bumped over one fallen tree after another. Paul, with his feet stretched out, wedged firmly into the sleigh, encouraged the tired horses with rein and voice. Catrina was compelled to steady herself with both hands on the bar of the apron; for the apron of a Russian sleigh is a heavy piece of leather stretched on a wooden bar.

'Then you think my duty is quite clear,' repeated the girl at length.

Paul did not answer at once.

'I am sure of it,' he said.

And there the question ended. Catrina Lanovitch, who had never been ruled by those about her, shaped her whole life unquestioningly upon an opinion.

They did not speak for some time, and then it was the girl who broke the silence.

'I have a confession to make and a favour to ask,' she said bluntly.

Paul's attitude denoted attention, but he said nothing.

'It is about the Baron de Chauxville,' she said.

'Ah!'

'I am a coward,' she went on. 'I did not know it before. It is rather humiliating. I have been trying for some weeks to tell you something, but I am horribly afraid of it. I am afraid you will despise me. I have been a fool—worse perhaps. I never knew that Claude de Chauxville was the sort of person he is. I allowed him to find out things about me which he never should have known—my own private affairs, I mean. Then I became frightened, and he tried to make use of me. I think he makes use of everybody. *You* know what he is.'

'Yes,' answered Paul, 'I know.'

'He hates you,' she went on. 'I do not want to make mischief, but I suppose he wanted to marry the Princess. His vanity was wounded because she preferred you, and he wanted to be avenged upon you. Wounds to the vanity never heal. I do not know how he did it, Paul, but he made me help him in his schemes. I could have prevented you from going to the bear hunt, for I suspected him then. I could have prevented my mother from inviting him to Thors. I could have put a thousand difficulties in his way, but I did not. I helped him. I told him about the people and who were the worst—who had been influenced by the Nihilists and who would not work. I allowed him to stay on here and carry out his plan. All this trouble among the peasants is his handiwork. He has organised a regular rising against you. He is horribly clever. He left us yesterday, but I am convinced that he is in the neighbourhood still.'

She stopped and reflected. There was something wanting in the story which she could not supply. It was a motive. A half-confession is almost an impossibility. When we speak of ourselves it must be all or nothing—preferably, nothing.

'I do not know why I did it,' she said. 'It was a sort of period I went through. I cannot explain.'

He did not ask her to do so. They were singularly like brother and sister in their mental attitude. They had driven through twenty miles of forest which belonged to one or other of them. Each was touched by the intangible, inexplicable dignity that belongs to the possession of great lands—to the inheritance of a great name.

'That is the confession,' she said.

He gave a little laugh.

'If none of us had worse than that upon our consciences,' he answered, 'there would be little harm in the world. De Chauxville's schemes have only hurried on a crisis which was fore-ordained. The progress of humanity cannot be stayed. They have tried to stay it in this country. They will go on trying until the crash comes. What is the favour you have to ask?'

'You must leave Osterno,' she urged earnestly; 'it is unsafe to delay even a few hours. Monsieur de Chauxville said there would be no danger. I believed him then, but I do not now. Besides, I know the peasants. They are hard to rouse, but once excited they are uncontrollable. They are afraid of nothing. You must get away to-night.'

Paul made no answer.

She turned slowly in her seat and looked into his face by the light of the waning moon.

'Do you mean that you will not go?'

He met her glance with his grave, slow smile.

'There is no question of going,' he answered. 'You must know that.'

She did not attempt to persuade. Perhaps there was something in his voice which she as a Russian understood—a ring of that which we call pig-headedness in others.

'It must be splendid to be a man,' she said suddenly in a ringing voice. 'One feeling in me made me ask you the favour, while another was a sense of gladness at your certain refusal. I wish I were a man. I envy you. You do not know how I envy you, Paul.'

Paul gave a quiet laugh—such a laugh as one hears in the trenches after the low hum of a passing ball.

'If it is danger you want, you will have more than I in the next week,' he answered. 'Steinmetz and I knew that you were

the only woman in Russia who could get your father safely out of the country. That is why I came for you.'

The girl did not answer at once. They were driving on the road again now, and the sleigh was running smoothly.

'I suppose,' she said reflectively at length, 'that the secret of the enormous influence you exercise over all who come in contact with you is that you drag the best out of everyone—the best that is in them.'

Paul did not answer.

'What is that light?' she asked suddenly, laying her hand on the thick fur of his sleeve. She was not nervous, but very watchful. 'There—straight in front.'

'It is the sleigh,' replied Paul, 'with your father and Steinmetz. I arranged that they should meet us at the cross-roads. You must be at the Volga before daylight. Send the horses on to Tver. I have given you Minna and The Warrior; they can do the journey with one hour's rest, but you must drive them.'

Catrina had swayed forward against the bar of the apron in a strange way, for the road was quite smooth. She placed her gloved hands on the bar and held herself upright with a peculiar effort.

'What?' said Paul. For she had made an inarticulate sound.

'Nothing,' she answered. Then, after a pause, 'I did not know that we were to go so soon. That was all.'

CHAPTER XLII.

THE STORM BURSTS.

THE large drawing-room was brilliantly lighted. Another weary day had dragged to its close. It was the Tuesday evening—the last Tuesday in March five years ago. The Starosta had not been near the castle all day. Steinmetz and Paul had never lost sight of the ladies since breakfast-time. They had not ventured out of doors. There was in the atmosphere a sense of foreboding—the stillness of a crisis. Etta had been defiant and silent—a dangerous humour—all day. Maggie had watched Paul's face with steadfast quiet eyes full of courage, but she knew now that there was danger.

The conversation at breakfast and luncheon had been main-

tained by Steinmetz—always collected and a little humorous. It was now dinner-time. The whole castle was brilliantly lighted as if for a great assembly of guests. During the last week a fuller state—a greater ceremony—had been observed by Paul's orders, and Steinmetz had thought more than once of that historical event which appealed to his admiration most—the Indian mutiny.

Maggie was in the drawing-room alone. She was leaning one hand and arm on the mantelpiece, looking thoughtfully into the fire. The rustle of silk made her turn her head. It was Etta, beautifully dressed, with a white face and eyes dull with suspense.

'I think it is warmer to-night,' said Maggie, urged by a sudden necessity of speech, hampered by a sudden chill at the heart.

'Yes,' answered Etta. And she shivered.

For a moment there was a little silence and Etta looked at the clock. It was ten minutes to seven.

A high wind was blowing, the first of the equinoctial gales heralding the Spring. The sound of the wind in the great chimney was like the moaning of high rigging at sea.

The door opened and Steinmetz came in. Etta's face hardened, her lips closed with a snap. Steinmetz looked at her and at Maggie. For once he seemed to have no pleasantry ready for use. He walked towards a table where some books and newspapers lay in pleasant profusion. He was standing there when Paul came into the room. The Prince glanced at Maggie. He saw where his wife stood, but he did not look at her.

Steinmetz was writing something on half a sheet of notepaper, in pencil. He pushed it across the table towards Paul, who drew it nearer to him.

'Are you armed?' were the written words.

Paul crushed the paper in the hollow of his hand and threw it into the fire, where it burnt away. He also glanced at the clock. It was five minutes to seven.

Suddenly the door was thrown open and a manservant rushed in—pale, confused, terror-stricken. He was a giant footman in the gorgeous livery of the Alexis.

'Excellency,' he stammered in Russian, 'the castle is surrounded—they will kill us—they will burn us out——'

He stopped abashed before Paul's pointing finger and stony face.

'Leave the room!' said Paul. 'You forget yourself.'

Through the open doorway to which Paul pointed peered the ashen faces of other servants huddled together like sheep.

'Leave the room!' repeated Paul, and the man obeyed him, walking to the door unsteadily with quivering chin. On the threshold he paused. Paul stood pointing to the door. He had a poise of the head—some sudden awakening of the blood that had coursed in the veins of hereditary potentates. Maggie looked at him; she had never known him like this. She had known the man, she had never encountered the Prince.

The big clock over the castle boomed out the hour, and at the same instant there arose a roar like the voice of the surf on a Malabar shore. There was a crashing of glass almost in the room itself. Already Steinmetz was drawing the curtains closer over the windows in order to prevent the light from filtering through the interstices of the closed shutters.

'Only stones,' he said to Paul, with his grim smile; 'it might have been bullets.'

As if in corroboration of his suggestion the sharp ring of more than one firearm rang out above the dull roar of many voices.

Steinmetz crossed the room to where Etta was standing white-lipped by the fire. Her clenched hand was gripping Maggie's wrist. She was half hidden behind her cousin. Maggie was looking at Paul. Etta was obviously conscious of Steinmetz's gaze and approach.

'I asked you before to tell me all you knew,' he said. 'You refused. Will you do it now?'

Etta met his glance for a moment, shrugged her shoulders, and turned her back on him. Paul was standing in the open doorway, with his back turned towards them—alone. The palace had never looked so vast as it did at that moment—brilliantly lighted, gorgeous, empty.

Through the hail of blows on the stout doors, the rattle of stones at the windows, the Prince could hear yells of execration and the wild laughter that is bred of destruction. He turned and entered the room. His face was grey and terrible.

'They have no chance,' he said, 'of effecting an entrance by force, the lower windows are barred. They have no ladders, Steinmetz and I have seen to that. We have been expecting this for some days.'

He turned towards Steinmetz as if seeking confirmation. The din was increasing. When the German spoke he had to shout.

'We can beat them back if we like. We can shoot them down from the windows. But'—he paused, shrugged his shoulders and laughed—'what will you? this Prince will not shoot his father's serfs.'

'We must leave you,' went on Paul. 'We must beware of treachery. Whatever happens we shall not leave the house. If the worst comes, we make our last stand in this room. Whatever happens, stay here till we come.'

He left the room, followed by Steinmetz. There were only three doors in the impregnable stone walls; the great entrance, a side door for use in times of deep snow, and the small concealed entrance by which the Starosta was in the habit of reaching his masters.

For a moment the two men stood at the head of the stairs listening to the wild commotion. They were turning to descend the state stairs when a piercing shriek, immediately drowned by a yell of triumph, broke the silence of the interior of the castle. There was a momentary stillness followed by another shriek.

'They are in!' said Steinmetz. 'The side door.'

And the two men looked at each other with wide eyes full of knowledge.

As they ran to the foot of the broad staircase the tramp of scuffling feet, the roar of angry voices, came through the passages from the back of curtained doorways. The servants' quarters seemed to be pandemonium. The sounds approached.

'Half-way up!' said Paul, and they ran half-way up the broad staircase side by side. There they stood and waited.

In a moment the baize doors were burst open and a scuffling mass of men and women poured into the hall—a very sewer of humanity.

A yell of execration signalised their recognition of the Prince.

'They are mad!' said Steinmetz, as the crowd surged forward towards the stairs with waving arms and the dull gleam of steel; with wild faces turned upward, wild mouths bellowing hatred and murder.

'It is a chance—it may stop them!' said Steinmetz.

His arm was outstretched steadily. A loud report, a little puff of smoke shooting upward to the gilded ceiling, and for one brief moment the crowd stood still, watching one of their ring-leaders, who was turning and twisting on his side half a dozen steps from the bottom.

The man writhed in silence with his hand to his breast and the crowd stood aghast. He held up his hand and gazed at it with a queer stupefaction. The blood dripped from his fingers. Then his chin went up as if someone was gripping the back of his neck. He turned over slowly and rolled to the bottom of the stairs.

Then Paul raised his voice.

'Listen to me,' he said.

But he got no further, for someone shot at him from the background, over the frantic heads of the others, and missed him. The bullet lodged in the wall at the head of the stairs, in the jamb of the gorgeous doorway. It is there to-day.

There was a yell of hatred and an ugly charge towards the stairs; but the sight of two revolvers held them there—motionless for a few moments. Those in front pushed back, while the shouters in the safe background urged them forward by word and gesture.

Two men holding a hundred in check. But one of the two was a Prince, which makes all the difference, and will continue to make that difference, despite halfpenny journalism, until the end of the world.

'What do you want?' cried Paul.

'Oh, I will wait,' he shouted in the next pause. 'There is plenty of time—when you are tired of shouting.'

Several of them proceeded to tell him what they wanted. An old story, too stale for repetition here. Paul recognised in the din of many voices the tinkling arguments of the professional agitator all the world over, the cry of 'Equality—Equality!' when men are obviously created unequal.

'Look out!' said Paul; 'I believe they are going to make a rush.'

All the while the foremost men were edging towards the stairs, while the densely packed throng at the back were struggling among themselves. In the passages behind, some were yelling and screaming with a wild intonation which Steinmetz recognised. He had been through the Commune.

'Those fellows at the back have been killing someone,' he said; 'I can tell by their voices. They are drunk with the sight of blood.'

Some new orator gained the ears of the rabble at this moment, and the ill-kempt heads swayed from side to side.

'It is useless,' he cried, 'telling him what you want. He will not give it you. Go and take it. Go and take it, little fathers; that is the only way.'

Steinmetz raised his hand and peered down into the crowd, looking for the man of eloquence, and the voice was hushed.

At this moment, however, the yelling increased, and through the doorway leading to the servants' quarters came a stream of men—bloodstained, ragged, torn. They were waving arms and implements above their heads.

'Down with the aristocrats! kill them—kill them!' they were shrieking.

A little volley of firearms further excited them. But vodka is not a good thing to shoot upon, and Paul stood untouched, waiting, as he had said, until they were tired of shouting.

'Now,' yelled Steinmetz to him in English, 'we must go. We can make a stand at the head of the stairs, then the doorway, then——'

He shrugged his shoulders. 'Then—the end,' he added as they moved up the stairs step by step, backwards.

'My very good friend,' he went on, 'at the door we must begin to shoot them down. It is our only chance. It is, moreover, our duty towards the ladies.'

'There is one alternative,' answered Paul.

'The Moscow Doctor.'

'Yes.'

'They may turn,' said Paul; 'they are just in that humour.'

The new-comers were the most dangerous. They were forcing their way to the front. There was no doubt that, as soon as they could penetrate the densely-packed mob, they would charge up the stairs, even in face of a heavy fire. The reek of vodka was borne up in the heated atmosphere, mingled with the nauseating odour of filthy clothing.

'Go,' said Steinmetz, 'and put on your doctor's clothes. I can keep them back for a few minutes.'

There was no time to be lost. Paul slipped away, leaving Steinmetz alone at the summit of the state stairway, standing grimly, revolver in hand.

In the drawing-room Paul found Maggie, alone.

'Where is Etta?' he asked.

'She left the room some time ago.'

'But I told her to stay,' said Paul.

To this Maggie made no answer. She was looking at him with an anxious scrutiny.

'Did they shoot at you?' she asked.

'Yes; but not straight,' he answered, with a little laugh as he hurried on.

In a few moments he was back in the drawing-room, a different man in the rough, stained clothes of the Moscow Doctor. The din on the stairs was louder. Steinmetz was almost in the doorway. He was shooting economically, picking his men.

With an effort Paul dragged one or two heavy pieces of furniture across the room, in the form of a rough barricade. He pointed to the hearthrug where Maggie was to stand.

'Ready!' he shouted to Steinmetz. 'Come.'

The German ran in, and Paul closed the barricade.

The rabble poured in at the open door, screaming and shouting. Bloodstained, ragged, wild with the madness of murder, they crowded to the barricade. There they stopped, gazing stupidly at Paul.

'The Moscow Doctor—the Moscow Doctor!' passed from lip to lip. It was the women who shouted it the loudest. Like the wind through a forest it swept out of the room and down the stairs. Those crowding up pushed on and uttered the words as they came. The room was packed with them.

'Yes!' shouted Steinmetz at the top of his great voice, 'and the Prince!'

He knew the note to strike, and struck with a sure hand. The barricade was torn aside, and the people swept forward falling on their knees, grovelling at Paul's feet, kissing the hem of his garment, seizing his strong hands in theirs.

It was a mighty harvest. That which is sown in the people's heart bears a thousandfold at last.

'Get them out of the place—open the big doors,' said Paul to Steinmetz. He stood cold and grave among them.

Some of them were already sneaking towards the door—the ringleaders, the talkers from the towns—mindful of their own necks in this change of feeling.

Steinmetz hustled them out, bidding them take their dead with them. Some of the servants re-appeared, peeping white-faced behind curtains. When the last villager had crossed the threshold, these ran forward to close and bar the great doors.

'No,' said Paul, from the head of the stairs, 'leave them open.'

So the great doors stood defiantly open. The lights of the state staircase flared out over the village as the peasants crept crestfallen to their cottages. They glanced up shamefacedly, but they had no word to say.

Steinmetz, in the drawing-room, looked at Paul with his resigned semi-humorous shrug of the shoulders.

'Touch-and-go, *mein Lieber*,' he said.

'Yes; an end of Russia for us,' answered the Prince.

He moved towards the door leading through to the old castle.

'I am going to look for Etta,' he said.

'And I,' said Steinmetz, going to the other entrance, 'am going to see who opened the side-door.'

CHAPTER XLIII.

BEHIND THE VEIL.

'WILL you come with me?' said Paul to Maggie. 'I will send the servants to put this room to rights.'

Maggie followed him out of the room, and together they went through the passages, calling Etta and looking for her. There was an air of gloom and chilliness in the rooms of the old castle. The outline of the great stones, dimly discernible through the wall-paper, was singularly suggestive of a fortress thinly disguised.

'I suppose,' said Paul, 'that Etta lost her nerve.'

'Yes,' answered Maggie doubtfully. 'I think it was that.'

Paul went on. He carried a lamp in one steady hand.

'We shall probably find her in one of these rooms,' he said.

'It is so easy to lose oneself among the passages and staircases.'

They passed on through the great smoking-room, with its hunting trophies. The lynx, with its face of Claude de Chauxville, grinned at them darkly from its pedestal.

Halfway down the stairs leading to the side door they met Steinmetz coming hastily up. His face was white and drawn with horror.

'You must not go down here,' he said, in a husky voice, barring the passage with his arm.

'Why not?'

'Go up again!' said Steinmetz breathlessly. 'You must not go down here.'

Paul laid his hand on the broad arm stretched across the stairway. For a moment it almost appeared to be a physical struggle, then Steinmetz stepped aside.

'I beg of you,' he said, 'not to go down.'

And Paul went on, followed by Steinmetz, and behind them, Maggie. At the foot of the stairs a broader passage led to the side door, and from this other passages opened into the servants' quarters, and communicated through the kitchens with the modern building.

It was evident that the door leading to the grassy slope at the back of the castle was open, for a cold wind blew up the stairs and made the lamps flicker.

At the end of the passage Paul stopped.

Steinmetz was a little behind him, holding Maggie back.

The two lamps lighted up the passage and showed the white form of the Princess Etta lying huddled up against the wall. The face was hidden, but there was no mistaking the beautiful dress and hair. It could only be Etta. Paul stooped down and looked at her, but he did not touch her. He went a few paces forward and closed the door. Beyond Etta a black form lay across the passage, all trodden under foot and dishevelled. Paul held the lamp down, and through the mud and blood Claude de Chauville's clear-cut features were outlined.

Death is always unmistakable, though it be shown by nothing more than a heap of muddy clothes.

Claude de Chauville was lying across the passage. He had been trodden underfoot by the stream of maddened peasants who had entered by this door which had been opened for them, whom Steinmetz had checked at the foot of the stairs by shooting their ringleader.

De Chauville's scalp was torn away by a blow, probably given with a spade or some blunt instrument. His hand, all muddy and bloodstained, still held a revolver. The other hand was stretched out towards Etta, who lay across his feet, crouching against the wall. Death had found and left her in an attitude of fear, shielding her bowed head from a blow with her upraised hands. Her loosened hair fell in a long wave of gold down to the bloodstained hand outstretched towards her. She was kneeling in De Chauville's blood, which stained the stone floor of the passage.

Paul leant forward and laid his fingers on her bare arm just

below a bracelet which gleamed in the lamp-light. She was quite dead. He held a lamp close to her. There was no mark or scratch upon her arm or shoulder. The blow which had torn her hair down had killed her without any disfigurement. The silken skirt of her dress, which lay across the passage, was trampled and stained by the tread of a hundred muddy feet.

Then Paul went to Claude de Chauville. He stooped down and slipped his skilled fingers inside the torn and mud-stained clothing. Here also was death.

Paul stood upright and looked at them as they lay, silent, motionless, with their tale untold. Maggie and Steinmetz stood watching him. He went to the door, which was of solid oak four inches thick, and examined the fastenings. There had been no damage done to bolt, or lock, or hinge. The door had been opened from the inside. He looked slowly round, measuring the distances.

'What is the meaning of it?' he said, at length, to Steinmetz, in a dull voice. Maggie winced at the sound of it.

Steinmetz did not answer at once, but hesitated—after the manner of a man weighing words which will never be forgotten by their hearers.

'It seems to me,' he said, with a slow, wise charity, the best of its kind, 'quite clear that De Chauville died in trying to save her—the rest must be only guesswork.'

Maggie had come forward and was standing beside him.

'And in guessing let us be charitable—is it not so?' he said, turning to her, with a twist of his humorous lips.

'I suppose,' he went on, after a little pause, 'that Claude de Chauville has been at the bottom of all our trouble. All his life he has been one of the stormy petrels of diplomacy. Wherever he has gone trouble has followed later. By some means he obtained sufficient mastery over the Princess to compel her to obey his orders. The means he employed were threats. He had it in his power to make mischief, and in such affairs a woman is so helpless that we may well forgive that which she may do in a moment of panic. I imagine that he frightened the poor lady into obedience to his command that she should open this door. Before dinner, when we were all in the drawing-room, I noted a little mark of dust on the white silk skirt of her dress. At the time I thought only that her maid had been careless. Perhaps you noticed it, mademoiselle? Ladies note such things.'

He turned to Maggie, who nodded her head.

'That,' he went on, 'was the dust of these old passages. She had been down here. She had opened this door.'

He spread out his hands in deprecation. In his quaint Germanic way he held one hand out over the two motionless forms in mute prayer that they might be forgiven.

'We all have our faults,' he said; 'who are we to judge each other. If we understood all, we might pardon. The two strongest human motives are ambition and fear. She was ruled by both. I myself have seen her under the influence of sudden panic. I have noted the working of her great ambition. She was probably deceived at every turn by that man, who was a scoundrel. He is dead, and death is understood to wipe out all debts. If I were a better man than I am, I might speak well of him. But—*ach Gott!* that man was a scoundrel. I think the good God will judge between them and forgive that poor woman. She must have repented of her action when she heard the clatter of the rioters all round the castle. I am sure she did that. I am sure she came down here to shut the door, and found Claude de Chauxville here. They were probably talking together when the poor mad fools who killed them came round to this side of the castle and found them. They recognised her as the Princess. They probably mistook him for the Prince. It is what men call a series of coincidences. I wonder what God calls it.'

He broke off, and stooping down he drew the lappet of the Frenchman's cloak gently over the marred face.

'And let us remember,' he said, 'that he tried to save her. Some lives are so. At the very end a little reparation is made. In life he was her evil genius. When he died they trampled him underfoot in order to reach her. Mademoiselle, will you come?'

He took Maggie by the arm and led her gently away. She was shaking all over, but his hand was steady and wholly kind.

He led her up the narrow stairs to her own room. In the little boudoir the fire was burning brightly; the lamps were lighted, just as the maid had left them at the first alarm.

Maggie sat down, and quite suddenly she burst into tears.

Steinmetz did not leave her. He stood beside her gently stroking her shoulder with his stout fingers. He said nothing, but the grey moustache only half concealed his lips, which were twisted with a little smile full of tenderness and sympathy.

Maggie was the first to speak.

'I am all right now,' she said. 'Please do not wait any longer, and do not think me a very weak-minded person. Poor Etta!'

Steinmetz moved away towards the door.

'Yes,' he said; 'poor Etta! It is often those who get on in the world who need the world's pity most.'

At the door he stopped.

'To-morrow,' he said, 'I will take you home to England. Is that agreeable to you, mademoiselle?'

She smiled at him sadly through her tears.

'Yes, I should like that,' she said. 'This country is horrible. You are very kind to me.'

Steinmetz went downstairs and found Paul at the door talking to a young officer, who slowly dismounted and lounged into the hall, conscious of his brilliant uniform—of his own physical capacity to show off any uniform to full advantage.

He was a lieutenant in a Cossack regiment, and as he bowed to Steinmetz, whom Paul introduced, he swung off his high astrakhan cap with a flourish, showing a fair boyish face.

'Yes,' he continued to Paul in English; 'the general sent me over with a sotnia of men, and pretty hungry you will find them. We have covered the whole distance since daybreak. A report reached the old gentleman that the whole countryside was about to rise against you.'

'Who spread the report?' asked Steinmetz.

'I believe it originated down at the wharfs. It has been traced to an old man and his daughter—a sort of pedlar, I think, who took a passage down the river—but where they heard the rumour I don't know.'

Paul and Steinmetz carefully avoided looking at each other. They knew that Catrina and Stepan Lanovitch had sent back assistance.

'Of course,' said Paul, 'I am very glad to see you, but I am equally glad to inform you that you are not wanted. Steinmetz will tell you all about it, and when you are ready for dinner it will be ready for you. I will give instructions that the men be cared for.'

'Thanks. The funny thing is that I am instructed, with your approval, to put the place under martial law and take charge.'

'That will not be necessary, thanks,' answered Paul, going out of the open door to speak to the wild-looking Cossacks sent for his protection.

In Russia, as in other countries where life is cheaply held, the death formalities are small. It is only in England, where we are so careful for the individual and so careless of the type, that we have to pay for dying, and leave a mass of red-tape formalities for our friends.

While the young officer was changing his uniform for the evening finery which his servant's forethought had provided, Paul and Steinmetz hurriedly arranged what story of the evening should be given to the world. Knowing the country as they did they were enabled to tell a true tale, which was yet devoid of that small personal interest that gossips love. And all the world ever knew was that the Princess Howard Alexis was killed by the revolted peasants while attempting to escape by a side door, and that the Baron Claude de Chauxville, who was staying in the neighbourhood, met his death in attempting to save her from the fury of the mob.

On the recommendation of Karl Steinmetz, Paul placed the castle and village under martial law, and there and then gave the command to the young Cossack officer pending further instructions from his general commanding at Tver.

The officer dined with Steinmetz, and under the careful treatment of that diplomatist inaugurated a reign of military autocracy which varied pleasingly between strict discipline and boyish neglect.

Before the master of the situation had slept off the effect of his hundred-mile ride and a heavy dinner, the next morning, Steinmetz and Maggie were ready to start on their journey to England.

The breakfast was served in the room abutting the cliff in the dim light of a misty morning.

The lamps were alight on the table, and Paul was waiting when Maggie came down cloaked for her journey. Steinmetz had breakfasted.

They said good morning, and managed to talk of ordinary things until Maggie was supplied with coffee and toast and a somewhat heavy, manly helping of a breakfast-dish. Then came a silence.

Paul broke it at length with an effort, standing as it were on the edge of the forbidden topic.

'Steinmetz will take you all the way,' he said, 'and then come back to me. You can safely trust yourself to his care.'

'Yes,' answered the girl, looking at the food set before her with a helpless stare. 'It is not that. Can I safely trust Etta's memory to your judgment? You are very stern, Paul. I think you might easily misjudge her. Men do not always understand a woman's temptations.'

Paul had not sat down. He walked away to the window, and stood there looking out into the gloomy mists.

'It is not because she was my cousin,' said Maggie from the table; 'it is because she was a woman leaving her memory to be judged by two men who are both—hard.'

Paul neither looked round nor answered.

'When a woman has to form her own life, and renders it a prominent one, she usually makes a huge mistake of it,' said the girl.

She waited a moment, and then she pleaded once more, hastily, for she heard a step approaching.

'If you only understood everything you might think differently—it is because you cannot understand.'

Then Paul turned round slowly.

'No,' he said, 'I cannot understand it, and I do not think that I ever shall.'

And Steinmetz came into the room.

In a few minutes the sleigh bearing Steinmetz and Maggie disappeared into the gloom, closely followed by a couple of Cossacks acting as guard and carrying despatches.

So Etta Sydney Bamborough—the Princess Howard Alexis—came back after all to her husband, lying in a nameless grave in the churchyard by the Volga at Tver. Within the white walls—beneath the shadow of the great spangled cupola—they await the Verdict, almost side by side.

CHAPTER XLIV.

KISMET.

BETWEEN Brandon in Suffolk and Thetford in Norfolk runs a quiet river, the Little Ouse, where few boats break the stillness of the water. On either bank stand whispering beech-trees, and so low is the music of the leaves, that the message of Ely's distant bells floats through them on a quiet evening as far as Brandon and beyond it.

Three years after Etta's death, in the glow of an April sunset, a Canadian canoe was making its stealthy way up the river. The paddle crept in and out so gently, so lazily and peacefully, that the dabchicks and other waterfowl did not cease their chatter of nests and other April matters as the canoe glided by.

So quiet, indeed, was its progress that Karl Steinmetz—suddenly white-headed, as strong old men are apt to find themselves—did not heed its approach. He was sitting on the bank with a gun, a little rifle lying on the grass beside him. He was half-asleep in the enjoyment of a large Havana cigar. The rays of the setting sun peeping through the lower branches made him blink lazily like a large good-natured cat.

He turned his head slowly, with a hunter's consciousness of the approach of someone, and contemplated the canoe with a sense of placid satisfaction.

The small craft was passing in the shadow of a great tree—stealing over the dark unruffled depth. A girl dressed in white, with a large diaphanous white hat and a general air of brisk English daintiness, was paddling slowly and with no great skill.

'A picture,' said Steinmetz to himself with Teutonic deliberation. '*Gott im Himmel!* what a pretty picture to make an old man young.'

Then his grey eyes opened suddenly and he rose to his feet.

'Coloss-a-al!' he muttered. He dragged from his head a lamentable old straw hat and swept a courteous bow.

'Mademoiselle,' he said, 'ah, what happiness! After three years!'

Maggie stopped and looked at him with troubled eyes; all the colour slowly left her face.

'What are you doing here?' she asked. And there was something like fear in her voice.

'No harm, mademoiselle, but good. I have come down from big game to vermin. I have here a saloon rifle. I wait till a water-rat comes and then I shoot him.'

The canoe had drifted closer to the land, the paddle trailing in the water.

'You are looking at my white hairs,' he went on in a sudden need of conversation. 'Please bring your boat a little nearer.'

The paddle twisted lazily in the water like a fish's tail.

'Hold tight,' he said, reaching down.

With a little laugh he lifted the canoe and its occupant far up on to the bank.

'Despite my white hairs,' he said, with a tap of both hands on his broad chest.

'I attach no importance to them,' she answered, taking his proffered hand and stepping over the light bulwark. 'I have grey ones myself. I am getting old too.'

'How old?' he asked, looking down at her with his old bluntness.

'Twenty-eight.'

'Ah, they are summers,' he said; 'mine have turned to winters. Will you sit here where I was sitting? See, I will spread this rug for your white dress.'

Maggie paused, looking through the trees towards the sinking sun. The light fell on her face and showed one or two lines which had not been there before. It showed a patient tenderness in the steady eyes which had always been there—which Catrina had noticed in the stormy days that were past.

'I cannot stay long,' she replied. 'I am with the Faneaux at Brandon for a few days. They dine at seven.'

'Ah, her ladyship is a good friend of mine. You remember her Charity Ball in town, when it was settled that you should come to Osterno. A strange world, mademoiselle—a very strange world, so small, and yet so large and bare for some of us.'

Maggie looked at him. Then she sat down.

'Tell me,' she said, 'all that has happened since then.'

'I went back,' answered Steinmetz, 'and we were duly exiled from Russia. It was sure to come. We were too dangerous. Altogether too quixotic for an autocracy. For myself I did not mind, but it hurt Paul.'

There was a little pause, while the water lapped and whispered at their feet.

'I heard,' said Maggie, at length, in a measured voice, 'that he had gone abroad for big game.'

'Yes—to India.'

'He did not go to America?' inquired Maggie indifferently. She was idly throwing fragments of wood into the river.

'No,' answered Steinmetz, looking straight in front of him.

'No, he did not go to America.'

'And you?'

'I—oh, I stayed at home. I have taken a house. It is behind the trees. You cannot see it. I live at peace with all men and pay my bills every week. Sometimes Paul comes and stays with me. Sometimes I go and stay with him in London or in Scotland. I smoke and shoot water-rats, and watch the younger generation making the same mistakes that we made in our time. You have heard that my country is in order again. They have remembered me. For my sins they have made me a count. Bon Dieu! I do not mind. They may make me a prince if it pleases them.'

He was watching her face beneath his grim old eyebrows.

'These details bore you,' he said.

'No.'

'When Paul and I are together we talk of a new heaven and a new Russia. But it will not come in our time. We are only the sowers, and the harvest is not yet. But I tell Paul that he has not sown wild oats, nor sour grapes, nor thistles.'

He paused, and the expression of his face changed to one of semi-humorous gravity.

'Mademoiselle,' he went on, 'it has been my lot to love the Prince like a son. It has been my lot to stand helplessly by while he passed through many troubles. Perhaps the good God gave him all his troubles at first. Do you think so?'

Maggie was looking straight in front of her across the quiet river.

'Perhaps so,' she said.

Steinmetz also stared in front of him during a little silence. The common thoughts of two minds may well be drawn together by the contemplation of a common object. Then he turned towards her.

'It will be a happiness for him to see you,' he said quietly.

Maggie ceased breaking small branches and throwing them into the river. She ceased all movement, and scarcely seemed to breathe.

'What do you mean?' she asked.

'He is staying with me here.'

Maggie glanced towards the canoe. She drew a short sharp breath, but she did not move.

'Mademoiselle,' said Steinmetz earnestly, 'I am an old man, and in my time I have dabbled pretty deeply in trouble. But taking it all round, even my life has had its compensations. And

I have seen lives which, taken as mere mortal existences—without looking to the hereafter at all—have been quite worth the living. There is much happiness in life to make up for the rest. But that happiness must be firmly held. It is so easily slipped through the fingers. A little irresolution—a little want of moral courage—a little want of self-confidence—a little pride and it is lost. You follow me?’

Maggie nodded. There was a great tenderness in her eyes—such a tenderness as, resting on men, may bring them nearer to the angels.

Steinmetz laid his large hand over hers.

‘Mademoiselle,’ he went on, ‘I believe that the good God sent you along this lonely river in your boat. Paul leaves me to-morrow. His arrangements are to go to India and shoot tigers. He will sail in a week. There are things of which we never speak together—there is one name that is never mentioned. Since Osterno you have avoided meeting him. God knows I am not asking for him anything that he would be afraid to ask for himself. But he also has his pride. He will not force himself in where he thinks his presence unwelcome.’

Steinmetz rose somewhat ponderously and stood looking down at her. He did not, however, succeed in meeting her eyes.

‘Mademoiselle,’ he said, ‘I beg of you most humbly—most respectfully—to come through the garden with me towards the house, so that Paul may at least know that you are here.’

He moved away and stood for a moment with his back turned to her looking towards the house. The crisp rustle of her dress came to him as she rose to her feet.

Without looking round he walked slowly on. The path through the trees was narrow, two could not walk abreast. After a few yards Steinmetz emerged on to a large sloping lawn with flower-beds, and a long low house above it. On the covered terrace a man sat writing at a table. He was surrounded by papers, and the pen in his large firm hand moved rapidly over the sheet before him.

‘We still administer the estate,’ said Steinmetz in a low voice. ‘From our exile we still sow our seed.’

They approached over the mossy turf, and presently Paul looked up—a strong face—stern and self-contained; the face of a man who would always have a purpose in life, who would never be petty in thought or deed.

For a moment he did not seem to recognise them. Then he rose, and the pen fell on the flags of the terrace.

'It is mademoiselle!' said Steinmetz, and no other word was spoken.

Maggie walked on in a sort of unconsciousness. She only knew that they were all acting an inevitable part, written for them in the great libretto of life. She never noticed that Steinmetz had left her side, that she was walking across the lawn alone.

Paul came to meet her, and took her hand in silence. There was so much to say that words seemed suddenly valueless; there was so little to say, that they were unnecessary.

For that which these two had to tell each other cannot be told in minutes nor yet in years; it cannot even be told in a lifetime, for it is endless, and it runs through eternity.

THE END.





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